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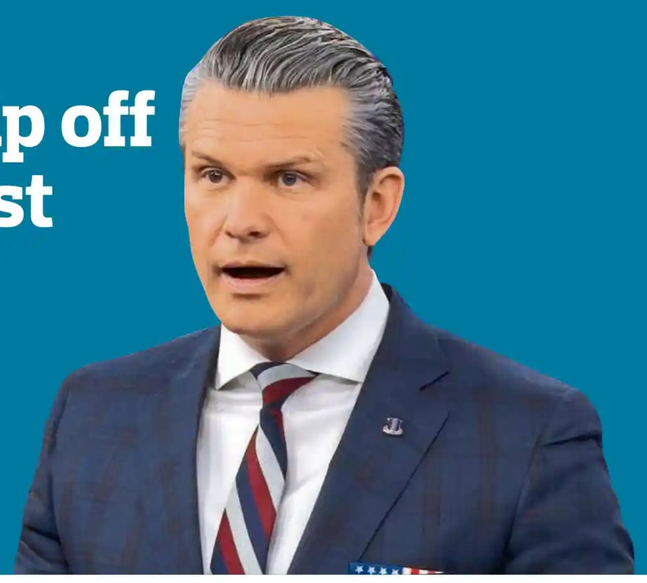
The Power of Good

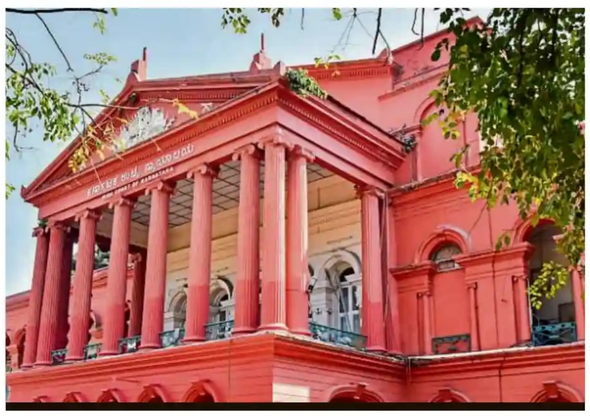
US sinks Iranian ship off Lanka coast

Defence Secy Hegseth terms attack 'quiet death'



Protection under Article 22 extends even to foreigners: HC

Page 3



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Lakkundi, the village that outshone a heavenly realm

A chance discovery of gold ornaments shines a spotlight on Lakkundi, once praised in a 12th-century inscription for its architecture and thriving mint economy, writes Vijay Mahantesh Papanal

A potful of gold ornaments, accidentally unearthed from the soil at Lakkundi in Gadag district recently, has stirred memories of a past long concealed beneath the very ground. People began speaking of the place with such affinitive familiarity as though a languishing Lakkundi emerged out of its obscurity all at once.

Even centuries ago, Lakkundi's greatness was celebrated in striking terms. An inscription recounts a poetic contest held to determine which of two towns was superior: the famed paradisaical town of Indra's Amaravathi or Lakkundi, the earthly town of the Kalyani Chalukyas. The elemental features of the two towns were measured thoroughly. Once their parities and polarities were compared, Lakkundi emerged as the winner in the contest, eclipsing Amaravathi. Endowed with architectural splendor, scholarly brilliance, cultural exuberance and material prosperity, a weighty Lakkundi remained firmly on the earth while Indra's plumy Amaravathi, devoid of any such worthy elements, was imagined having flown up into the thin air and disappeared into the skies. In this metaphor, the earthly town of mortals had vanquished a heavenly abode of the immortals.

This evocative comparison appears in an epigraphical record dated 1185 CE, issued during the reign of the Kalyani Chalukyan emperor Someshvara-IV. Inscribed on a slab set into the roof of the Ganesha temple at Lakkundi, the lithographer records in lines 15 and 16: *"Indrana Aggada Amaravathigam Bhogavathigam Sele Melagippudu Dharege Lokkigundi Gramam."*

A translation of these Kannada lines reveals their bold claim: even Indra's Amaravathi appeared 'chintzy' when compared to Lokkigundi (Lakkundi).

The rich history of the place and the scribe-poet's opulent description find resonance in the grand temple architecture evident in monuments such as the Brahma Jinalaya.

The mint centre

Beyond poetic praise, inscriptions provide concrete evidence of Lakkundi's economic prominence. Lakkundi was one of the most prominent mint centres of medieval Karnataka. Direct evidence of this can be found in an inscription dated 1184 CE, engraved on a slab in the Kashi Vishwanath temple at Lakkundi, also issued during the reign of Someshvara-IV. The royal order inscribed mandates that a portion of the income generated from the minting transactions be offered to the deity Mallikarjuna. The Kannada term *Aanikara* in these inscriptions refers to a person in charge of, or owner of, a mint centre.

Interestingly, such mint centres were administered by private individuals — in this cited instance, one Aachi Shetty — even while the monarch remained the supreme authority.

Another inscription dated 1186 CE, engraved on the beam of the Nanneshvara temple, directs the mint official Shankara Shetty to donate five Panas (coins of a certain denomination) from minting income to the deity Nanneshvara.

The coins minted at Lakkundi were famously known as "Lokkigundi Gadyana" or simply "Lokki Gadyana," meaning a *Gadyana* coin struck at Lakkundi. The term *Gadyana* refers to a gold (or sometimes silver) coin equivalent to the ancient Varaha. The word *Lokki* itself does not denote a coin of any denomination; rather, it is a shortened form of "Lokkigundi," the place name.

From Lokkigundi to Lakkundi

The earliest recorded form of the town's name in inscriptions is "Lokkigundi." Some scholars suggest that the name arose from the abundance of Lokki plants (botanically known as Vitex negundo) in the region, combined with the word *Gundi*, meaning "lowland" in Kannada. Thus, "Lokkigundi" likely referred to a low-lying area where Lokki plants grew in abundance.

Over centuries, phonological changes, particularly a process known in linguistics as metathesis, altered the word's structure. The short vowel gradually replaced the long vowel, transforming "Lokki" into "Lakki," and eventually producing the modern form "Lakkundi" from the earlier "Lokkigundi".

Thus, the journey of this intriguing place of antiquity — from ancient Lokkigundi to modern Lakkundi — reveals an enigmatic historical legacy that only a few towns can claim.

(The author is an independent researcher of Indology, ancient history and epigraphy)

Side view of Nanneshvara Temple, Lakkundi. PHOTOS BY AUTHOR

The Manikeshwara Temple at Lakkundi.

The Kashi Vishwanath and Sun temple at Lakkundi.

The historic Brahma Jinalaya at Lakkundi commissioned by Attimabbe, a noted Jain philanthropist.

FEEDBACK
Send your ideas and comments to: spectrum@deccanherald.co.in

The Holi laughter challenge

Divyashri Mudakavi writes about a quirky tradition that tests crowds against two unyielding performers

In parts of North Karnataka, Holi is celebrated in many hues, each town adding its own rhythm to the festival.

In Bagalkot, the Halgi Mela sets the tone. Traditional halgi drums lead the celebrations as dancers move in circles and crowds gather around. In villages of Uttara Kannada district, Bedara Vesha, a folk performance known for its striking costumes, becomes part of the festivities. In Gadag and the twin cities of Hubballi-Dharwad, idols of Kama and Rati are installed in public spaces from Hunnime (full moon day) to Rangapanchami. Ahead of the festival of colours, people worship the idols for five days.

However, in Ranebennur, Hangal and a few other places in Haveri district, Holi carries a different test. A day before the festival of colours, two men dressed as Rati and Manmatha (Kama or Kamanna) sit on a public stage, still and not smiling for nearly five hours. The crowd's task is simple: make them laugh. For nearly seventy years, the challenge has continued in Ranebennur. This year too, on March 3, people tried from 7 pm to nearly 1 am — but Rati and Manmatha did not smile.

"This year's live Rati and Kamanna event was the 67th one. We had announced a prize of Rs 13 lakh for anyone who could make them smile. But no one succeeded," said the event committee head Siddali Anil. He said the tradition was started in Ranebennur by their ancestors as a form of entertainment during Holi and has since grown into a popular local attraction.

Those who take up the challenge are given a microphone and a few minutes. People, including men, women and even children, deliver comic lines, sing songs in the local flavour and sometimes arrive in quirky costume. A few even attempt playful "bribes", telling Rati and Manmatha they can share half the prize money if they agree to smile. However, the rules are clear: no one is allowed to touch or physically disturb them, or use distasteful words. Over the years, even professional humourists have tried, but nothing has worked.

This year, the event in Ranebennur drew participants from across Karnataka, including Mysuru, Dharwad, Gadag and Dandeli, but the result remained the same.

"I heard about the challenge through a friend and a message that was being shared. It made me curious, so I came to Ranebennur to try my luck," said Balagouda, a Sociology lecturer from Belagavi.

In Ranebennur, Gadigeppa Roddannavar has been donning the role of Kamanna for the last 27 years and Kumar Hadpad as Rathi for the last 32 years. "During normal days, both of them are humorous in nature. But when they dress up as Rathi and Kamanna, their only aim is not to smile," Anil added.

Rathi and Manmatha dare locals in Hangal to take on the laughter challenge.

In nearby Hangal, the tradition has been followed for the past two decades. This year, the event will be held on March 6 here, a day before Rangapanchami.

Maltesh Tumarikoppa, 49, who works in theatre and media, has been portraying Kamanna in Hangal for several years. "It is a big event for the town and people try all means to make us laugh. While sitting there, I hear what people say, but my mind wanders to other thoughts. That helps me not pay attention," he said with a smile.

Years ago, he began practising by concentrating on a wall for hours. Now, he steps into the role without preparation. This year, the person playing Rati alongside him is new to the stage, and Maltesh says he is helping him prepare for the test.

For years, the 'Ratis' and 'Manmathas' of these towns have kept the challenge alive, leaving the prize money unclaimed. For hours, they sit without a smile as laughter rises around them, turning Holi into a festival of colours and shared laughter.

A man tries to make Rati and Kamanna laugh at an event held ahead of Holi at Ranebennur. PHOTO BY MUKTHESHWAR KURUGUNDMATH

The hidden crabs of the Western Ghats

Pavan Kumar H writes about the crab discoveries in Uttara Kannada, highlighting their unique microhabitats, scientific collaborations and the growing environmental threats they face

In the dense forests and lateritic plateaus of Uttara Kannada district, life thrives in unassuming corners. Far from human disturbance, tree hollows and narrow rock crevices, cradle vibrant colonies of freshwater crabs, enduring in these hidden refuges.

Of the 84 freshwater crab species currently known from the Western Ghats, 63 have been identified in the last two decades. In Uttara Kannada alone, 10 species have been documented over the past ten years, with five discovered in the last five years by frontline forest personnel — Gopal Naik, Sunil Gouda and Parashuram Bajantri, and citizen scientist Gopal Hegde.

"Sunil and I were patrolling the Shirave hills in the Karwar forest division, looking for orchids. Our eyes fell on a deep reddish-brown and milky-white crab that peeked out of a cavity and then disappeared. We had never seen such a crab before," recalls Gopal. His curiosity eventually led to the identification of the 84th freshwater crab species in the Western Ghats, *Ghatiana dhritiarum*.

Parashuram Bajantri and Gopal Hegde, who described four other species — *Ghatiana dvivarna*, *Ghatiana dvirupa*, *Vela bandhavya* and *Aradhya placida* — in the Yellapur region of Uttara Kannada district, also encountered them during routine patrols.

Sameer Kumar Pati, Assistant Zoologist at the Zoological Survey of India's Western Regional Centre in Pune, who guided Gopal and Parashuram, says the high diversity of endemic crabs in Uttara Kannada is linked to its geological antiquity, good rainfall and varied habitats.

"The last five discoveries in the district were largely possible because of the active field involvement of forest personnel. Their knowledge of terrain and microhabitats, continuous presence, and the department's support facilitated early detection," he explains.

Describing the forest staff as vital bridges between research and field-based conservation, he adds that their contribution shows how collaboration between taxonomists and forest personnel can accelerate biodiversity documentation in complex regions like Uttara Kannada.

According to experts, the identification of new species in the Western Ghats is also changing the understanding of crab ecology.

"Earlier, researchers focused on streams and rivers, but several recently documented species — especially in the genus Ghatiana — inhabit specialised microhabitats such as lateritic plateaus, rock cavities, forest floors and water-filled tree holes. These habitats are often seasonal, spatially restricted, and isolated," says Sameer.

Crabs are considered indicator species, as their presence or absence reflects habitat health. Gopal adds that their research highlighted the ecological role of crabs, which serve not only as prey but also as micro-predators. "They function as nutrient recyclers, feeding on decaying plant matter and forest litter. They also consume insects such as termites and mosquito larvae and at the same time, they are food for birds and other predators, playing a crucial role in the forest food web," Sameer says.

Mounting threats

Despite the region's status as a biodiversity hotspot, the crabs here are facing mounting threats. Their habitats are harmed due to deforestation, agricultural expansion, mining, infrastructure development, hydrological alterations and climate change. Many crab species have localised distributions, sometimes limited to a single hill or forest patch. This makes them vulnerable to even small disturbances.

"Most species are poorly studied and not assessed for conservation status. Without baseline data, effective management is challenging," says Sameer, noting the area still has high potential for discovery of new crab species.

Senior forest officials say they are committed to conserving the region's biodiversity. Vasanth Reddy, Chief Conservator of Forests (CCF), Dharwad, who oversaw the Canara Circle during these discoveries, notes that curiosity drove the staff to find the new species.

"All three personnel went beyond routine duties. The department provided guidance and permissions for the study," he says, adding that field-based staff collaborating with scientists can greatly enhance biodiversity exploration and conservation efforts.

Freshwater crab species in the Western Ghats Ghatiana dhritiarum, Ghatiana rouxi, Ghatiana dvirupa and Ghatiana dvivarna.
PHOTOS BY GOPAL NAIK, SAMEER KUMAR PATI AND PARASHURAM BAJANTRI

Thursday, March 5, 2026 No 64 ₹7

DH

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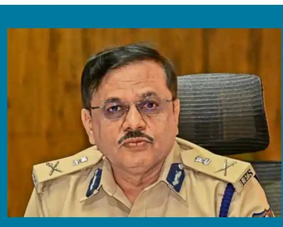


Two months into 2026, K'taka records 2,378 drug-related cases

Page 3

Chinnaswamy fix: Panel says KSCA behind the clock

Committee says work on ground belies claims by cricket body

DH SPECIAL

PRAJWAL D'SOUZA
BENGALURU, DHNS

A view of ongoing maintenance and safety work at M Chinnaswamy Stadium in Bengaluru on Wednesday. DH PHOTO/PUSHKAR V

Despite claims by the Karnataka State Cricket Association (KSCA), the expert committee set up by the state government has found the state's cricketing body lagging in the timely implementation of the recommendations before IPL begins, likely at the end of March.

The timeline committed by KSCA does not evoke satisfaction with the actual work done on the ground, well-placed sources told *DH*.

Even as the concerns remain, on Tuesday, both Royal Challengers Bengaluru (RCB) and KSCA announced through a press release and a press conference, respectively, that five matches, one playoff, and the final of the IPL 2026 season will be held at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium.

Eleven people had died and scores were left injured on June 4, 2025, at the stadium following a stampede during RCB's maiden title victory celebrations.

A commission headed by retired high court judge Justice John Michael D'Cunha was set up to inquire into the incident. The state government later set up an expert committee chaired by M Maheshwar Rao, Chief Commissioner, Greater Bengaluru Authority (GBA), to oversee the implementation of the recommendations by the D'Cunha commission.

The state government also issued an order on February 16, empowering the committee to accept or deny permission to host matches at the stadium based on the implementation of the recommendations.

A copy was reviewed by *DH*. *DH* has learnt that KSCA had mutually agreed with the committee to implement the recommendations in three phases: short-term, medium-term and long-term. March 5 and March 10 were decided as the dates for the implementation of the first phase. Documents supporting this were also reviewed by *DH*.

"KSCA is not following the directions of the expert committee, especially regarding the removal of obstructions and the setting up of holding areas. There is also a lack of consensus within the KSCA on using the KSCA B ground as a holding area," a well-placed source aware of the development said.

Some of the pending recommendations include the lack of a plan for an emergency exit route and evacuation drills, details of the medical triage facility, etc, the sources said.

▸ KSCA, Page 5

Panel's areas of concern

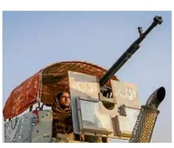
- Removal of obstructions and the setting up of holding areas
- Lack of consensus within the KSCA on using the KSCA B ground as a holding area
- Lack of a plan for an emergency exit route
- Evacuation drills, details of the medical triage facility, etc

A view of ongoing maintenance and safety work.

> The committee is continuously working with the KSCA team to monitor the progress of the work.
>
> **M Maheshwar Rao**
> Chairman of expert committee

> If at all the expert committee has found something lagging, the KSCA assures that the agreed timeline will be adhered to.
>
> **Santhosh Menon**
> secretary, KSCA

Quickly



Pakistan targets Bagram airbase

Pakistan targeted the Bagram airbase in Afghanistan as its operation was going against the Taliban over their alleged failure to stop terrorist attacks, media reports said.

Details on Page 11

DMK, Cong finalise TN polls alliance

After weeks of negotiations and several rounds of back-channel talks, Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK on Wednesday allotted 28 Assembly seats and a Rajya Sabha berth to the Congress as part of the deal for the April-May polls.

Details on Page 8

Kerala Guv signs official language Bill

Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar has signed the Malayalam Language Bill, which makes Malayalam the state's sole official language. The Bill had faced opposition from the Karnataka government.

Details on Page 9

SUBBAIAH INSTITUTE OF MEDICAL SCIENCES, SHIVAMOGGA

(Affiliated to RGUHS, Bengaluru & Recognized by NMC, New Delhi)

PUBLIC NOTICE

Subbaiah Institute of Medical Sciences, Shivamogga, Announces Free Postgraduate Medical Seats to Encourage Pre and Para-Clinical Education

In a landmark initiative to strengthen the foundation of medical education and encourage more students to pursue pre and para-clinical specialities, **the Management of Subbaiah Institute of Medical Sciences, Shivamogga** is pleased to announce a special scholarship scheme for the academic year 2025-26.

To attract meritorious candidates and promote these vital branches of medicine, the institute will offer **free Postgraduate Medical Seats (with no tuition fees)** for selected Pre and Para-Clinical courses.

Attractive Discounts will be offered for Below Clinical Branches:

In addition to the above initiative, the management is also pleased to announce **attractive discounts for Management quota seats** in the below mentioned clinical department.

Courses Offered for the Academic Year 2025-2026

Sl.No.	Courses
1	MD Paediatrics
2	MD General Medicine
3	MD Radiology
4	MD Respiratory Medicine
5	MD Emergency Medicine
6	MS Orthopaedics
7	MS General Surgery
8	MS Obstetrics & Gynaecology (OBG)

Key Details of the Scheme:

Eligibility: Candidates from all categories (Government Quota, Private Quota, and NRI/Management Quota) are eligible.

Allotment Process: The seats will be alloted during the **Stray Vacancy Round of counselling conducted by the Karnataka Examinations Authority (KEA).**

About Subbaiah Institute of Medical Sciences:

Subbaiah Institute of Medical Sciences is a premier medical institution in Shivamogga committed to providing quality medical education, research, and healthcare services to the community.

For More Details Contact 98444 20677, 99007 11032, 99001 70055, 97319 87246

Amid missile attacks in Dubai, people relieved to arrive in Bengaluru

Relatives anxious to meet their family members flock to KIA arrival lounge

ASRA MAVAD
BENGALURU, DHNS

Passengers from Dubai step off their flight into a warm welcome at the Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru on Wednesday. DH PHOTOS/BK JANARDHAN

Amid tensions across parts of West Asia, anxious scenes unfolded at Terminal 2 of the Kempegowda International Airport (KIA) as the solitary Emirates flight from Dubai landed around 6.52 pm.

With flights to and from Dubai severely affected for five days, families held bouquets and mobile phones, scanning faces emerging from the sliding doors as they waited to greet their loved ones.

Many returning passengers spoke of tension in the air, saying they had heard missiles overhead for the past five days.

Some have taken refuge here.

Alia, a British citizen, was desperate to get out of the UAE. "It was a frightening situation," she said, describing the loud blasts in the night. She expressed relief about landing in Bengaluru. "I have friends and family here," Alia added.

Jigani resident Chandra Shekhar, 41, was caught in Dubai during a week-long trip to visit his wife. "She was unwell," Shekhar said of his wife. "I wanted to take care of her."

Shekhar was supposed to return on February 28, but happened to spend more time with his wife as the flights got cancelled.

"Though Dubai functioned normally on the surface, there was underling tension," he said. "I felt uncomfortable leaving my wife (alone), but she was confident about the Dubai government (protecting her)."

"I had gone to Dubai to drop my daughter who had just given birth. It was very difficult to leave my daughter and five-month-old baby and come back to Bengaluru. I still feel scared," said Preeti, 58.

CHANDRA SHEKHAR
Resident of Jigani

"Though Dubai functioned normally on the surface, there was underling tension. I felt uncomfortable leaving my wife (alone), but she was confident about the Dubai government (protecting her).

34 flights cancelled on Wednesday

Airspace restrictions prompted the cancellation of 34 flights at KIA. Eighteen arrivals and 16 departures were cancelled, affecting flights to Abu Dhabi, Riyadh, Jeddah, Dammam, Dubai, and Doha.

Dubai calmer than what is being shown

Passengers *DH* spoke to said Dubai was much calmer than what is being portrayed on social media and Indian news channels.

Despite the conflict, businesses such as hotels did not hike prices.

"I was there to watch the Dubai tennis open," said Chandrashekar CK, a Kanakapura resident. When his flight was cancelled, he stayed back and worked remotely.

"My family back home was panicking because of the news they were consuming. There was so much fake news that it left me shocked," Chandrashekar added.

Chaos at airport

At 9 pm on February 28, Chandra Shivanna, 65, boarded a flight from Dubai to the United States to meet her son.

"We were headed to the US via Dubai," she said. "We boarded the flight and the engines were on. But it was announced that there would be a delay. Later, the pilot announced that the airspace had been closed due to the conflict and he was trying to find an alternative route. Eventually, we were asked to deboard the flight at 4 am."

Chandra and her husband decided to cancel their trip. "Once we got out of the flight, the airport was in utter chaos," she said. People did not know where to go. We knew it was not the right time (for the US trip). Thankfully, our airline organised our transport and stay for five days."

Killing of Khamenei: Case filed against protesters over rally

G Parameshwara

BENGALURU, DHNS: Home Minister G Parameshwara on Wednesday said police had registered a case following a recent protest in the city over the reported killing of Iran's Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"We have registered cases where there have been violations. First of all, in Bengaluru city, they are not supposed to take out a procession. When they do so without permission, we have to register a case. We have registered cases and will not allow them to take to the streets," the minister told reporters in Bengaluru.

A large gathering was held on March 1 in Richmond Town, central Bengaluru, in connection with the issue, amid the ongoing tensions involving Iran, the US and Israel.

STEPPING INTO OTHER WORLDS

The rise of 'Reality Shifting' among young adults

KUSHAGRA BHARDWAJ
BENGALURU, DHNS

'Reality Shifting' is the idea of mentally moving your awareness from your current reality to a different, imagined one.People who practise it, often called shifters, use specific techniques (like visualisation, scripting, or meditation) to try to experience a "desired reality" in their mind.

A growing number of Gen Z internet users say they can shift their consciousness into alternate realities, including fictional worlds such as Hogwarts, the Marvel multiverse, and a version of oneself that had never experienced grief.

The phenomenon, called 'Reality Shifting', has moved from obscure online forums to a widely discussed practice among young adults.

Reality Shifting refers to the practice of mentally moving beyond one's present consciousness into an alternate reality. People involved in the practise, known as shifters, attempt to move from their current reality to a desired one through specific techniques.

Recently, Shweta Sunil, PhD scholar (Junior Consultant), Nimhans; Dr Manoj Kumar Sharma and Dr Nitin Anand from the Department of Clinical Psychology, SHUT Clinic, Nimhans, studied the practice.

Published in the 'Imagination, Cognition and Personality' journal, the study found people use Reality Shifting to process grief, seek new experiences, engage with fictional characters or cope with gender dysphoria. However, it also highlighted that the practice carries serious risks like "shifting burnout" and the use of dangerous physical methods, such as intermittent hypoxia, to induce altered states.

In the first stage, researchers held a focus group with six social media users who engaged with Reality Shifting content and 10 who did not. The second phase was a three-month survey involving 59 participants.

Unlike casual daydreaming, Reality Shifting is a systematic, ritualised process.

"Practitioners often start by scripting, writing out excruciatingly detailed plots of their alternate lives, including their relationships, their appearance, and even specific rules for the other world. The transition typically involves meditative techniques, such as lying down in the star position, controlled breathing, combined with subliminal audio tracks and guided imagery. The goal is to reach a state of altered consciousness where the practitioner feels they have successfully shifted," Shweta told *DH*.

She pointed out that the 'shift' was often short-lived. "People said they 'mini-shifted', meaning they felt certain physiological symptoms or changes in their body or mind."

Several of them will have some altered sensory experiences like tingling, twitching and hearing faint voices. This is 'mini shifting' since the person did not totally shift to the reality, but they had these experiences.

One striking finding was that shifters did not report higher levels of psychological distress than the general population. While many dismiss Reality Shifting as escapism for the "broken", the study points instead to a drive for novelty seeking.

"They are not the bungee-jumping types," Shweta added. "Instead, they seek intense, novel stimulation within the safety of their own minds."

For some, the study found Reality Shifting acts as a tool for self-discovery.

'Desired Reality'

One participant, a transperson, used it to experience life in an affirmed gender within a 'Desired Reality', gaining confidence to begin transition in real life.

But the practice is not without risks, the study found.

Shifting is often "painstakingly effortful", requiring weeks of meditation, with many facing burnout.

Some practitioners also resort to dangerous methods.

"One of the participants, who also mentors others, used intermittent hypoxia, basically holding breath to the point of suffocation, to induce an altered state. He said that his mentees informed him of having suicidal thoughts because of the practice, but he considered it a step for better results," the researcher highlighted.

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Finn's blazing ton flattens SA

NZ storm into T20WC final with 9-wicket win

Page 14

US sinks Iranian ship off Lanka coast; 87 dead

Vessel was returning from Vizag after exercise with Indian Navy

KALYAN RAY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The escalating West Asia conflict reached India's backyard on Wednesday when an Iranian frigate IRIS Dena was sunk in the Indian Ocean near the Sri Lankan coast after being hit by a torpedo fired from a US submarine, a top official said on Wednesday.

Sri Lanka's navy said it recovered 87 bodies, and rescued 32 people.

"An American submarine sunk an Iranian warship that thought it was safe in international waters. Instead, it was sunk by a torpedo," US Defence Secretary Pete Hegseth said, noting the strike as evidence of USA's global reach in its war on Iran.

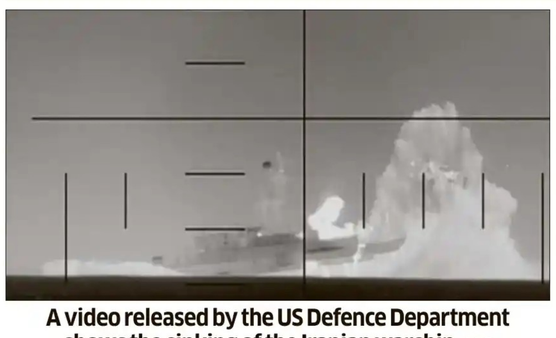
While Hegseth did not disclose the ship's identity, Sri Lankan authorities said their Navy rescued 32 people from the distressed ship.

A Moudge-class frigate, IRIS Dena was returning home after participating in the Indian Navy's International Fleet Review and Milan 2026 exercise last month at Visakhapatnam.

Hegseth described the attack "quiet death" and observed that it was the first US sinking of an enemy ship by torpedo since World War II. The Pentagon also released a video of the torpedo strike on the Iranian ship.

New Delhi has not given any official reaction to the strike.

▸ Lanka, Page 5



A video released by the US Defence Department shows the sinking of the Iranian warship. AFP

IRIS Dena

Sunk 40 nm off southern Lanka's Galle port

- Lankan navy received distress signal around **5 am**
- Incident occurred outside Lankan territorial waters, but falls within country's search & rescue zone

LATEST DEVELOPMENTS

1. **Iran:** Israeli air strikes continue
2. **Lebanon:** Israel orders evacuation of a large swathe of southern Lebanon, expands air and ground ops
3. **Strait of Hormuz:** Shipping halted amid Iranian attacks on multiple oil tankers
4. **Iraq:** Iran attacks Kurdish rebel groups in autonomous Kurdistan
5. **Gulf:** Saudi Aramco's Ras Tanura refinery struck again; Iranian missile hits US base at Al Udeid, Qatar; drone hits US consulate in Dubai; a girl killed in Kuwait; Iranian drones and missiles fired at targets across region

Country/Group	Fatalities
Iran	**1,097***
Lebanon	72
Israel	12
US troops	6
Others	10

* Civilians

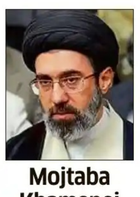
Rupee hits all-time low of 92.35

The rupee slumped 56 paise to close at an all-time low of 92.35 against the US dollar on Wednesday.

Details on Page 12

Khamenei's son frontrunner for top post; Israel threatens to kill successor

REUTERS: Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's son Mojtaba has emerged as frontrunner for the position of Iran's supreme leader even as Israel's defence minister threatened on Wednesday to assassinate any leader picked by the current regime in Tehran to succeed Khamenei.



Mojtaba Khamenei

Mojtaba Khamenei, 56, is seen by Iran's establishment as a potential successor to his father, two Iranian sources said on Wednesday. The sources said Mojtaba was not in Tehran when his father was killed in an airstrike. Mojtaba's wife was also killed in the airstrike.

A powerful mid-ranking cleric, Mojtaba has opposed reformers seeking to engage with the West.

His close ties with the Revolutionary Guards give him leverage across Iran's political and security apparatus and he has built up influence as his father's "gatekeeper", sources said.

If elected, Mojtaba will face pressure from US sanctions and could face opposition from disgruntled Iranians.

Kashmir under fresh curbs P.8

War disrupts global supply chains P.11

Speculations swirl over Nitish Kumar's Rajya Sabha entry

ABHAY KUMAR
PATNA

A major political shift appears imminent in Bihar, with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar likely to shift to the Rajya Sabha, thereby paving the way for a new CM in the state.

However, Union Minister Giriraj Singh dismissed the rumor as a "Holi prank," asserting, "Nitish Kumar is the chief minister."

Though there has been no official announcement, sources claimed that the CM is likely to file his nomination papers on March 5.

Speculation is also rife that in case Nitish Kumar moves to the Upper House, the BJP will take the top post while accommodating Nitish's s son, Nishant Kumar, as the deputy chief minister.

Nitish Kumar

The grapevine has been abuzz with Nitish moving to national politics ever since JD(U) working president Sanjay Jha returned from New Delhi on Wednesday and held talks with Nitish.

It is believed that Nitish's key aide Lallan Singh was also present during the meeting, where it was decided in principle that Nitish may file his nomination on Thursday.

▸ Nitish Kumar, Page 5

Outlook for 2026-27	
Revenue Expenditure	**Projection**
Salaries	Rs 94,446 cr
Pensions	Rs 42,438 cr
Interest payments	Rs 52,440 cr
Subsidies	Rs 87,918 cr
Admin expenses	Rs 11,061 cr
Social security pensions	Rs 12,135 cr
Other expenditures	Rs 44,947 cr
Total	**Rs 3,45,385 cr**

Growing admin costs to hog Budget outlay

Salaries and pensions alone will require Rs 1.36 lakh crore

BHARATH JOSHI
BENGALURU, DHNS

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, who once advocated for administrative weight loss for the government to cut costs, will have to allocate a staggering Rs 3.45 lakh crore towards day-to-day expenses in the next fiscal.

Salaries and pensions alone will require an outlay of Rs 1.36 lakh crore, according to government projections.

The bulging revenue expenditure could leave Siddaramaiah with little manoeuvrability in providing funds for developmental spending, pundits say.

For the fiscal year ending in March, the size of the government's budget was Rs 4.09 lakh crore, of which 82% involved revenue expenditure and debt repayment. The remaining Rs 71,336 crore was capital expenditure.

Against this, the government has managed to spend only 46% up to January.

Revenue expenditure includes committed spending such as salaries, pensions, interest payments, subsidies and so on.

"The increase in committed expenditure, including the state's spending on guarantees and various welfare schemes, has increased the revenue expenditure," the Mid-Year Review of State Finances said in December.

"Simultaneously, the shortfall in revenue receipts on account of GST rate rationalisation has further constrained the state's fiscal position."

▸ Budget, Page 5

Bescom plans cyber security centre

DH SPECIAL

SNEHA RAMESH
BENGALURU, DHNS

Bescom is planning to set up an exclusive Cyber Security Operations Centre (C-SOC) at its head office here to ensure safety of consumer data and protect official systems from cyber threats.

Official sources said a recent third-party audit flagged that Bescom's IT infrastructure was vulnerable to cyber attacks and hence, the power supply company has decided to set up such a centre.

> We have lakhs of consumers and it is important that we protect their data. Also, crores of money is paid online and all the transactions should be protected. Hence, the cyber security centre is being set up to ensure that the system is fool-proof.
>
> **Dr Shivashankara N,** Bescom MD

The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) has also directed escoms to keep their systems safe, the sources said.

Though there haven't been any serious attacks on Bescom infrastructure, the threat is real, officials said. This is important given that Bescom is a public-facing utility.

"The cyber security centre is being set up to ensure that the system is fool-proof," Bescom MD Dr Shivashankara N told *DH*.

To obtain a power connection, address proofs such as Aadhaar and details of building are collected and all of these, along with the power-usage patterns, are stored in the Bescom database.

▸ Bescom, Page 5

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Nepal to hold general election today

KATHMANDU, PTI: Voting will be held in Nepal on Thursday, the first one after a Gen Z-led protest toppled the government. More than 18.9 million Nepalese will exercise their franchise to elect 275 member House of Representatives from among 3,406 candidates vying for 165 seats under direct voting and 3,135 vying for 110 seats through proportionate voting.

Details on Page 11

Unesco heritage panel to visit Hampi in April

HUBBALLI, DHNS: Unesco's World Heritage Committee is likely to visit Hampi in the second week of April to assess the conservation status of the Vijayanagar kingdom's monuments.

A senior official aware of the visit informed *DH* that the Reactive Monitoring Committee will visit the World Heritage Site following complaints of monument mismanagement.

Details on Page 3

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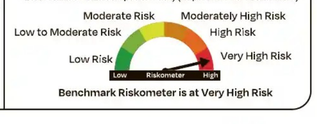

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Ex-techie kills self after domestic dispute

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 35-year-old woman died by suicide following a domestic dispute in north Bengaluru, police said on Tuesday.

The deceased, Sushma, lived near Soladevanahalli.

Police said she had earlier worked at a prominent IT company in the city, but was a homemaker at the time of her death. She married Puneeth Kumar five years ago and the couple has a four-year-old son.

Investigations revealed frequent quarrels between Sushma and her mother-in-law, Kalpana. Despite living in the same house, they allegedly cooked separately, police said. Tension reportedly rose after Kalpana law objected to Sushma's cooking.

Sushma was found hanging in her room upstairs on Monday morning while her husband and mother-in-law were in another room.

Police registered a case over allegations of dowry harassment and took the husband into custody.

Yemalur-ORR Jn facelift; East Corp reviews works

Administration under criticism over crumbling infra

BENGALURU, DHNS

Corporation Commissioner DS Ramesh and Chief Engineer M Lokesh inspect roadworks in Mahadevapura on Wednesday. PHOTO: GBA

The Bengaluru East City Corporation on Thursday reviewed various roadworks in the Mahadevapura Assembly constituency, which had faced intense criticism last year over crumbling infrastructure.

Corporation Commissioner DS Ramesh, along with engineers, inspected multiple sites to expedite the ongoing works.

Among the projects reviewed was the development of the Yemalur Junction stretch from Doddanekundi Main Road to Outer Ring Road Junction, covering 1.8 km. De-silting and milling works are currently underway.

The team also inspected the white-topping works in Doddanekundi village, which are 50% complete, as well as the Gopalan School–Goshala Road stretch.

The commissioner reviewed the progress of the underpass work near Hope Farm Junction and directed officials to coordinate with the Forest Department to secure the necessary approvals at the earliest. He also instructed engineers to commence work near Big Bazaar and Hoodi Circle without delay.

During the inspection at Garudacharpalya Main Road, officials noticed encroachments on the footpath. They were instructed to clear them immediately to ensure safe and obstruction-free pedestrian movement.

Speed up works at Nayandahalli Jn: Corporation chief to officials

BENGALLURU, DHNS: Bengaluru West City Corporation (BWCC) Commissioner Rajendra KV on Wednesday instructed officials to expedite development works at Nayandahalli Junction.

Rajendra KV

The work is being taken up under the Suraksha 75 project and aims to ease traffic congestion at the junction.

As part of the project, the junction is being redesigned and traffic islands removed.

Rajendra, who inspected ongoing works under his jurisdiction, also instructed officials to complete the Hoskerehalli service road works in a scientific manner to ease congestion. He also inspected a vacant site near the Indira Canteen at Deepanjali Nagar for construction of a transfer station.

West Zone grievance meet today

GBA Chief Commissioner M Maheshwar Rao will hold a public grievance meeting at the IPP Office Hall in Malleswaram between 2.30 pm and 5 pm on Thursday. People can use the opportunity to raise their concerns.

HOLI HUES

Young revelers drenched in vibrant colors celebrate the spirit of Holi with joy and laughter at an event in Bengaluru on Wednesday. DH PHOTOS/ PUSHKAR V & RANJU P

BDA officials supervise the clearance drive on Wednesday.

Properties worth Rs 70 cr reclaimed

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Bangalore Development Authority (BDA) has reclaimed two properties valued at over Rs 70 crore in Mallathahalli and Sir M Vishweshwaraiah Layout 7th Block.

In a media release, the BDA said the Mallathahalli property, located in Survey No 49/2, measures 35 guntas. "The BDA took possession of the land after clearing encroachments. The property is valued at Rs 45 crore," the release stated.

The second property, worth Rs 25 crore, is situated in Survey No 64 of Herohalli village in Yeshwantpur hobli.

The BDA task force reclaimed 13 guntas of land and demolished the encroachments.

The authority advised the public to exercise due diligence before purchasing sites or other properties.

It urged buyers to invest only in duly approved layouts after thoroughly verifying title documents, statutory approvals, and clearances from competent authorities.

Man held for killing polio-stricken uncle over house dispute

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 22-year-old man from Austin Town allegedly killed his polio-stricken uncle after he refused to vacate a leased house.

Inayat Pasha (52), a mechanic, was found dead in his bed in the ground floor house around 6.45 pm on March 1.

Pasha had leased the house from his elder sister, Husna Banu. When Pasha's son Syed Mohammed asked Banu and her son Masroor Ahmed what had happened, they said they had come to give him food but found him unconscious near the door. He did not respond despite their attempts to wake him up.

Suspecting foul play, Mohammed lodged a police complaint. Police picked up Ahmed for questioning.

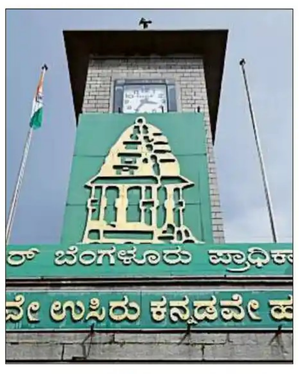
During interrogation, Ahmed said Pasha had not vacated the house despite repeated requests. Ahmed had met Pasha around 4.30 pm on March 1 and asked him to vacate the house. However, Pasha allegedly abused him and issued rape threats.

Things went out of control, as Ahmed hit Pasha in the face, eyes and ribs, leading to his death, police said.

BNP slams govt for delaying ward-wise reservation list

Calls it a deliberate and direct insult to judicial authority

BENGALURU, DHNS



Bengaluru NavaNirmana Party (BNP) has accused the state government of disregarding the highest office of the Indian judiciary by not releasing the final ward-wise reservation list for the long-overdue corporation elections by February 20.

Slamming the government for inaction, the party dubbed it a deliberate attempt to postpone local governance and bypass constitutional mandates.

"The state government's failure to meet the Supreme Court deadline is not just a procedural lapse, but rather a deliberate and direct insult to judicial authority and a betrayal of the citizens of Bengaluru.

"Ward delimitation was completed months ago, so there is no technical reason for this delay. It is a calculated move to keep the city in administrative limbo, denying millions of citizens their right to elected representation and stalling vital local governance through ward committees and area sabhas," said Srikanth Narasimhan, founder of Bengaluru NavaNirmana Party.

Bengaluru has been without an elected city council for almost five years. "Citizens have no local representatives to raise their concerns or demand answers. Every delay in holding elections only worsens this situation and weakens people's trust in the system," said Vishnu Reddy, BNP zonal president (Mahadevapura).

"Ward boundaries were finalised months ago, the legal framework is in place, and officials have had ample time. Yet the government continues to delay the reservation list. Repeated delays and missed deadlines have irreparably damaged public confidence in the electoral process," said Rishvanjas Raghavan, BNP youth wing president.

North Corporation to auction 81 properties tomorrow

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Bengaluru North City Corporation (BNCC) is set to auction 81 properties whose owners have failed to clear property tax dues. The auction will be held on Friday at 3 pm.

In Zone 1 under BNCC, 47 properties have pending dues of Rs 1.32 crore. In Zone 2, 34 properties have dues of Rs 62.18 lakh. The total pending dues stand at Rs 1.94 crore.

Property owners failed to pay the dues despite receiving multiple notices from the corporation, which also issued proclamation notices.

The auction will be held at the 3rd floor hall of the Yelahanka Mini Vidhana Soudha near N.E.S, Bengaluru.

Nimhans hosts first global neuropsychology meet

BENGALURU, DHNS: The first International Conference on Clinical Neuropsychology and Cognitive Neuroscience (I-CNCNC 2026) will be held at Nimhans from March 5 to 7 under the theme 'Brain Health: From Theory to Practice'.

The conference aims to strengthen conceptual, evidence-based and translational perspectives in clinical neuropsychology within current developments in cognitive neuroscience and related applied fields.

The conference, along with one-day pre-conference workshops, will bring together experts, clinicians, researchers and students from clinical psychology, neuropsychology, cognitive neuroscience, engineering and other fields working on neuro cognition and brain health.

The workshops will cover themes, including psychotherapies in neuropsychological rehabilitation, neuromusicology, brain computer interface, and forensic neuropsychology.

Shree Daksha Academy excels at cultural fest

BENGALURU, DHNS: The cultural team of Shree Daksha Academy, Andrahalli, won multiple prizes and secured an overall third-place finish at Sourabha 26, a state-level intercollegiate cultural festival hosted by Rangasourabha from February 11 to 28.

Representing the college, the Dakshataranga troupe competed against teams from across the state in theatre, music and technical categories.

The team's drama presentation won second prize in the 'Best Drama' category.

Individually, Kishore was honoured with the 'Best Actor' award, while Pranathi was named 'Best Actress'. Poorvi received the 'Best Supporting Actress' title, and Akash was recognised as 'Team Best Actor'. In the technical categories, Yesuraj won the 'Best Promotion' award and Puneeth bagged the 'Best Stage Design' award.

The team also secured second prize for its Rangageethe visual presentation.

In the music segment, Akash Doddur earned third place in 'Classical Instrumental Music', according to a media release.

The Dakshataranga troupe competed in theatre, music and technical segments.

7,000+ attend brain exhibition on National Science Day

BENGALURU, DHNS: More than 7,000 people visited a two-day brain exhibition hosted by the National Institute of Mental Health and Neurosciences (Nimhans) on the occasion of National Science Day.

The annual event aimed to raise public awareness on brain health, mental wellbeing and advances in neuroscience research and clinical care.

The exhibition featured about 95 stalls presented by more than 30 departments and centres of the institute, including basic sciences, neurosciences and behavioural sciences.

The stalls had interactive exhibits, demonstrations, digital displays, screening tools, audiovisual presentations, quiz contests and mind games.

Visitors also took part in hands-on activities on themes such as brain structure, function and diseases, psychology, child and adolescent mental health, neuroimaging, neurosurgery, rehabilitation, nursing and emerging neuroscientific technologies.

The exhibition also allowed visitors to touch and feel models of the human brain.

Metro Railway, Kolkata

e-Tender is invited by Principal Chief Engineer, Metro Railway for the following work: **Name of work:** "Execution of works for installation of Lateral Shear Restrainers over the pier caps of viaduct from Mahanayak Uttam Kumar Station to Kavi Subhash Station (16/18 km to 25/5 km) of both UP & DN Line in Blue Line of Metro Railway, Kolkata"; **Approx Cost of Work:** ₹ 11,97,85,085.15; **Earnest Money :** ₹ 7,48,900.00; **Completion Period:** 12 (Twelve) Months, **Date and Time of Closing:** 31.03.2026 at 12:00 Hrs. The Tender Document and other details can be obtained from the website **www.ireps.gov.in**. Amendments/Corrigendum, if any, would be uploaded only on the website.

Abridged e-Tender Notice No.: Civil-2558-2026-(Open) (Two Packet System)

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ಜ್ಞಾನ ಜ್ಯೋತಿ ಸೌಹಾರ್ದ ಸಹಕಾರಿ ಸಂಘ ನಿಯಮಿತ

ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ ಸಿಎ–22 ಇ. 3ನೇ ಅಡ್ಡರಸ್ತೆ, ಯಲಹಂಕ ನ್ಯೂ ಟೌನ್, ಬೆಂಗಳೂರು–560064

ನಮೂನೆ–2ಎ

(ನಿಯಮ 5ಇ(3))

ಚುನಾವಣಾ ನೋಟಿಸ್

1	ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳಿಂದ ನಾಮಪತ್ರಗಳನ್ನು ಸ್ವೀಕರಿಸಲು ಪ್ರಾರಂಭಿಸಿದ ದಿನಾಂಕ: ಸಲ್ಲಿಸುವ ವೇಳೆ	ದಿನಾಂಕ: 13.03.2026 ರಂದು ಶುಕ್ರವಾರ ದಿಂದ ಬೆಳಿಗ್ಗೆ 11:00 ರಿಂದ ಮಧ್ಯಾಹ್ನ 3.00 ರವರೆಗೆ
2	ನಾಮಪತ್ರವನ್ನು ಸಲ್ಲಿಸಲು ಕೊನೆಯ ದಿನಾಂಕ (ನಿಯಮ 5)	ದಿನಾಂಕ:14.03.2026 ಶನಿವಾರ ಬೆಳಿಗ್ಗೆ 11.00 ಗಂಟೆಯಿಂದ ಮಧ್ಯಾಹ್ನ 3:00 ಗಂಟೆಯವರೆಗೆ
3	ರಿಟರ್ನಿಂಗ್ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಯಿಂದ ನಾಮ–ಪತ್ರಗಳ ಪರಿಶೀಲನೆ [ನಿಯಮ 5ಜಿ]	ದಿನಾಂಕ: 15.03.2026 ಭಾನುವಾರ ಬೆಳಿಗ್ಗೆ 11:30 ಗಂಟೆಗೆ
4	ಕ್ರಮಬದ್ಧವಾದ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳ ನಾಮ–ಪತ್ರಗಳು ಹಾಗೂ ತಿರಸ್ಕೃತ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳ ನಾಮಪತ್ರಗಳ ಪಟ್ಟಿ ಪ್ರಕಟಣೆ [ನಿಯಮ 5ಐ)	ದಿನಾಂಕ: 15.03.2026 ಭಾನುವಾರ ನಾಮಪತ್ರಗಳ ಪರಿಶೀಲನೆ ನಂತರ
5	ಸ್ಪರ್ಧೆಯಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳ ನಾಮ–ಪತ್ರಗಳನ್ನು ಹಿಂತೆಗೆದುಕೊಳ್ಳುವುದು. (ನಿಯಮ 5 ಹೆಚ್)	ದಿನಾಂಕ: 16.03.2026 ಸೋಮವಾರ ಮಧ್ಯಾಹ್ನ 3:00 ಗಂಟೆವರೆಗೆ
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7	ರಿಟರ್ನಿಂಗ್ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಯಿಂದ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳು ಅಪೇಕ್ಷಿಸಿದ್ದಲ್ಲಿ ಚಿಕ್ಕಗಳ ಹಂಚಿಕೆ(ನಿಯಮ 5 ಜೆ)	ದಿನಾಂಕ: 16.03.2026 ಸೋಮವಾರ ಮಧ್ಯಾಹ್ನ 3:00 ಗಂಟೆ ನಂತರ
8	ಚಿಹ್ನೆ ಸಹಿತ ಕ್ರಮಬದ್ಧವಾಗಿ ಸ್ಪರ್ಧೆಯಲ್ಲಿರುವ ಅಭ್ಯರ್ಥಿಗಳ ಪಟ್ಟಿ (ನಿಯಮ 5ಜೆ)	ದಿನಾಂಕ: 18.03.2026 ಬುಧವಾರ ಮಧ್ಯಾಹ್ನ 1:00 ಗಂಟೆಗೆ
9	ಮತದಾನದ ದಿನಾಂಕ ಮತ್ತು ಸಮಯ	**22.03.2026ರ ಭಾನುವಾರ ಬೆಳಿಗ್ಗೆ 11:00 ರಿಂದ ಸಂಜೆ 4:00 ರವರೆಗೆ ಸಂಘದ ಆವರಣದಲ್ಲಿ**
10	ಮತ ಎಣಿಕೆ ದಿನ	ಮತದಾನದ ನಂತರ
11	ರಿಟರ್ನಿಂಗ್ ಅಧಿಕಾರಿಯಿಂದ ಫಲಿತಾಂಶ ಘೋಷಣೆ	ಮತ ಎಣಿಕೆಯ ನಂತರ

ವಿಶೇಷ ಸೂಚನೆಗಳು: 1. ಸಹಕಾರಿಯ ಉಪವಿಧಿ ಸಂ:36(1) ರ ಪ್ರಕಾರ ಚುನಾವಣೆಯ ಮೂಲಕ ಭರ್ತಿ ಮಾಡಬೇಕಾಗಿರುವ ಆಡಳಿತ ಮಂಡಲಿಯ **ಸದಸ್ಯರ ಸ್ಥಾನಗಳ ಸಂಖ್ಯೆ ಒಟ್ಟು 17 (ಹದಿನೇಳು).** ಅ) ಸಾಮಾನ್ಯ ಸ್ಥಾನ: 11. ಆ) ಪರಿಶಿಷ್ಟ ಜಾತಿ ಮೀಸಲು ಸ್ಥಾನ: 01. ಇ) ಪರಿಶಿಷ್ಟ ಪಂಗಡ ಮೀಸಲು ಸ್ಥಾನ: 01. ಈ) ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ವರ್ಗದ ಪ್ರವರ್ಗ 'ಎ' ಮೀಸಲು ಸ್ಥಾನ: 01. ಉ) ಹಿಂದುಳಿದ ವರ್ಗದ ಪ್ರವರ್ಗ 'ಬಿ' ಮೀಸಲು ಸ್ಥಾನ: 01. ಊ) ಮಹಿಳೆಯರ ಮೀಸಲು ಸ್ಥಾನ: 02.

ಸಹಿ/–
ಮುಖ್ಯ ಕಾರ್ಯನಿರ್ವಹಣಾಧಿಕಾರಿ.

EASTERN RAILWAY

Tender No. : SDSTE-ETN-IPIS-BSAE-SKG, Dated 02.03.2026. Open e-Tender is invited by Divisional Railway Manager, Eastern Railway, DRM Building, near Howrah Railway station, Howrah-711101 in Single Packet System for the following work. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids upto closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. **Name of Work** : SCH A - Replacement of IPIS system at Bansberia, Tribeni, Jirat, Guptipara (4 stations) in suburban sections over Howrah division. SCH B - Replacement of IPIS system at Adisaptagram, Pandooah, Memari, Shaktigarh (4 stations) in suburban sections over Howrah division. **Advertised Value:** ₹ 6,35,34,210.91. **Earnest Money:** ₹ 4,67,700/-. **Tender Document Cost :** 0.00. **Bidding Start Date:** 11.03.2026. **Period of Completion:** 09 Months. **Validity of Offer :** 60 Days. **Tender Closing Date & Time :** 25.03.2026, 15.00 hrs. **Date & Time of Uploading Tender :** 02.03.2026, 17.27 hrs.

(HWH-666/2025-26)

Tender Notice is also available at websites : www.er.indianrailways.gov.in / www.ireps.gov.in

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Narayana Schools hosts grand finale of 'Clubs Culmination' & 'Reading Carnival'

BENGALURU, DHNS: Narayana Schools hosted the grand finale of the 'Clubs Culmination' and 'Reading Carnival' in Bengaluru on February 28, bringing together young participants from 32 Narayana Techno and Olympiad branches across Karnataka.

The finalists were selected from a pool of over 30,000 students across the state through a multi-tier elimination process conducted at the school, cluster and state levels.

The morning session centered on the EDGE framework (Explore, Design, Grow, Excel).

Finalists showcased projects across four specialised clubs aimed at nurturing 21st-century skills: Synergy-X (STEM and aerospace innovations), Idea Vault (financial literacy and entrepreneurship), Pixel Palette (digital creativity and design), and Global Vox (public discourse and communication).

The afternoon featured the 'Reading Carnival', which included competitions across pre-primary, middle and high school categories. Following the same progression from school to cluster to state levels, winners were recognised for their expressive and analytical literary skills.

Phanindra Sama, founder of redBus; author Rachna Chhabria; Dr Sindhura Narayana Ponguru, Director; and Puneet Kothapa, President, Narayana Educational Institutions, were present on the occasion, according to a media release.

Participants at the the grand finale of 'Clubs Culmination'.

◆ IN THE CITY ◆

GENERAL

Discussion: On 'MGNREGA Vs VB-G RAM G – The harsh realities'; Jean Dreze to participate; Organised by MGNREGA Rakshana Okkuta Karnataka; Gandhi Bhavan, Kumara Krupa Road; 4.30 pm.

Book release: 'Maleraya Nakkanu', authored by R Hamsa; R Sunandamma, M Thimmaiah and others to take part; Kuvempu auditorium, Kannada Sahitya Parishad, Chamarajpet; 5 pm.

CULTURAL

Play: 'Gadhayuddha'; Organised by Hariharasutha Kala Mandali; Ravindra Kalakshetra, JC Road; 3 pm.

Bharatanatyam performance: By students of Srikanteshwara Kala Kendra; Directed by Gauri Sagar; Nanjangud Raghavendra Swamy Mutt, Jayanagar; 5.15 pm.

◆ CITY WEATHER ◆

FORECAST

Mainly clear sky

TEMPERATURES

Maximum	33.0°C
Minimum	20.0°C
Rainfall	--
Humidity	95%
Sunset (Mar 5)	6:29 pm
Sunrise (Mar 6)	6:34 am
Moonrise	7:18 am
Moonset	6:58 pm

(Relevant data recorded at 5.30 pm) Source: IMD

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving

THE MIRACLE PRAYER

Dear heart of Jesus in the past I have asked many favours. This time I ask you this special one (mention favour). Take it dear heart of Jesus and place it within your heart where your father sees it. Then in his merciful eyes it will become your own favour not mine. Amen. Say this prayer three times for three days and your favour will be granted. Never been known to fail. Must promise publication of prayer.

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Justice Khazi appointed as chairperson of RERA tribunal

BENGALURU, DHNS: The state government has appointed Justice J M Khazi, former judge of the Karnataka High Court, as chairperson of the Karnataka Real Estate Appellate Tribunal. The post was vacant for a long time.

The tribunal is the first appellate forum to deal with grievances against any direction, decision or order made by the Real Estate Regulatory Authority (RERA) or by an adjudicating officer.

Khazi was appointed to the top post of the tribunal by exercising the powers conferred under Section 46 (2) of the Real Estate (Regulation and Development) Act, 2026, the government said in a notification. Currently, the tribunal has two judicial members -- Santhosh Kumar Shetty and former IAS officer Mahendra Jain.

As per the order issued by the Housing department on March 3, the chairperson cannot continue to hold any other position either under the state and central government or any public undertaking of any government body.

The term of the chairperson shall be for a period of five years from the date of the assumption of charge of the post or till the attainment of the age of sixty-seven years or until further orders, whichever is earlier, the order stated.

Actor Darling Krishna is in the lead role of 'Love Mocktail 3'.

'Love Mocktail 3' gets slots left open by 'Toxic'

BENGALURU, DHNS: Kannada film 'Love Mocktail 3' was quick to fill up some of the slots left open by Yash's 'Toxic: A Fairy Tale for Grownups'.

A big clash was expected between the Yash blockbuster and 'Dhurandhar 2', both releasing on March 19. Many Kannada producers had put off their releases, thinking the two high-profile films would dominate the cinemas.

On Wednesday, KVN Productions announced that the Yash film would release only on June 4. They cited escalating tensions and instability in West Asia as the reason.

'Love Mocktail 3', starring Darling Krishna and Milana Nagaraj and earlier slated for an April 10 release, will now release on March 19. It hopes to draw Ugadi and Eid ul-Fitr holiday crowds.

Budget pvt schools to hike fees up to 12% for next academic year

'Inflation has affected the schools badly'

BENGALURU, DHNS

Come next academic year and even the budget private schools will hike the fees between 8% and 12%, owing to the increase in expenses.

As shared by the private budget schools, which charge between Rs 500 and Rs 3,000 per month, they have informed the parents about the fee hike. Normally, they used to increase the fee between 2% and 4%. However, considering the increase in salaries of staff, decrease in the number of enrollment and more private schools coming up every year, the schools have decided to increase fee up to 12%.

However, the Associated Management of Primary and Secondary Schools in Karnataka has requested the school managements to keep the hike nominal.

"There is a provision to increase the fees up to 15% annually, but we have requested the school managements to keep it nominal, while taking a decision," said D Shashi Kumar, General Secretary of the Association.

In the state, there are over 17,000 private budget schools, of which around 4,000 are in Bengaluru and charge between Rs 25,000 and Rs 30,000 annually.

"Ninety per cent of the budget schools charge between Rs 500 and Rs 3000 per month and this category of schools is functioning even in Bengaluru. In recent years, the supply has exceeded the demand and the government is approving at least 500 to 600 new schools every year, which is affecting the enrollment of existing schools," explained Shashi Kumar.

Private budget schools said that water and electricity charges, contribution to Professional Tax, Provident Fund and ESI had all increased.

"Inflation has affected the budget schools badly and they have no option but to increase the fees. When you see it in percentage, it may look high, but a school that is charging Rs 25,000 per year and announces 10% increase in fee, then the hike will be Rs 2,500 per year and it is not as high as parents assume," opined a management representative of a budget private school in Bengaluru.

However, the parents' association has raised objections over the schools hiking fees and demanded that the government come out with a fee regulatory policy.

B N Yogananda of Karnataka Private School College Parents' Associations' Co-Ordination Committee said, "At least 20 states have established Fee Regulatory Committees and we urge the Karnataka government to put a cap on fees at private schools."

Meanwhile, non-budget schools affiliated to other boards have also increased fees. Most of them have increased fees between 5% and 10%. The fee in these schools ranges between Rs 70,000 and Rs 2.5 lakh per year.

Two months into 2026, K'taka records 2,378 drug-related cases

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka has registered 2,378 drug-related cases this year, between January and February.

Compared to 4,187 cases in 2024 and 6,825 cases in 2025, cases registered in the state under Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act are on the rise.

With focused enforcement drives, Karnataka is likely to see the highest number of drug-related cases in 2026, predicted DG&IGP M A Saleem.

"If you are to extrapolate this figure, the state will likely see 15,000 cases this year, equal to the cases recorded in states like Rajasthan and Punjab. This might lead to a perception that cases are rapidly rising, but at the core, we want to end this once and for all," he told a media interaction on Wednesday.

He highlighted the efforts of the Anti-Narcotics Task Force set up last year.

"The public has become aware of these crimes. As a result, certain crimes which were common earlier such as siphoning off money from babnk accounts, credit card scams or digital arrest scams, are coming down. But the nature of the scams keeps evolving," he said.

On Bengaluru's traffic, he said, "The problem with Bengaluru is that it is a radial city, neither circular nor vertical. So, to travel from point A to point B, people unnecessarily travel extra. For example, if one has to travel from Jayanagar to Malleswaram, he or she has to come to the city centre. This is the system we've inherited, and we're trying to do what suits it best".

MELON MANIA

Sellers arrange the watermelons for sale on the roadside near Malleswaram railway station in Bengaluru. DH PHOTO/KISHOR KUMAR BOLAR

Protection under Article 22 extends even to foreigners: HC

'Every person must be informed of the grounds of arrest'

BENGALURU, DHNS

The Karnataka High Court has held that the constitutional protection under Article 22 (protection against arbitrary arrest and detention) extends to all persons within the territory of India, including foreign nationals, as it is not citizen-centric but person-centric.

Justice M Nagaprasanna said that Article 22(1) mandates that every person must be informed of the grounds of arrest, and that this requirement is a mandatory constitutional safeguard, not a procedural formality.

The court said this while partly allowing the petition filed by two Nigerian nationals, booked under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act.

On May 12, 2024, the petitioners were arrested by the Sampigehalli police and 400 gm of MDMA, a banned substance, was recovered. The petitioners claimed that they were not furnished with the grounds of arrest at the time of apprehension and were not produced before the magistrate within 24 hours of arrest.

The authorities informed the court that the petitioners had been overstaying for the last 10 years.

After examining the constitutional provisions and the Apex Court judgment on the grounds of arrest, Justice Nagaprasanna held that the petitioners are entitled to be set at liberty for defective grounds of arrest.

"The law does not prescribe a rigid form of communicating the grounds of arrest. Substantial compliance is sufficient provided the arrested person is made aware of the basis of the arrest. The judicial review in such cases is limited to whether the grounds of arrest were communicated or not and not to the adequacy or correctness of the grounds of arrest," the court said.

The court, however, directed that the petitioners be handed over to the Foreigners Regional Registration Office (FRRO).

"The moment the petitioners are set at liberty, they must be handed over to FRRO to take further action in terms of SOP for withdrawal of the prosecution and consequent deportation of these petitioners as they are admittedly overstaying in this country for more than 10 years without any valid documents," the court said.

The court further observed that the petitioners are not deported merely because one or the other prosecution is pending against them.

The court directed the government to constitute a screening committee both at the state and at the district levels in terms of the SOP and report the constitution of such committees within four months.

HC refuses to quash probe against digital gold app Jar

BENGALURU, DHNS: The High Court of Karnataka has refused to quash investigations against Bengaluru-based start-up Jar Gold Retail Ltd and its director Nischay Arakalgud, observing that the allegations disclose serious and triable issues.

The company, which started as a digital gold app in 2021 with zero turnover, has grown to a turnover of Rs 4,000 crore. Koramangala police have registered a suo motu FIR after investors raised complaints.

The complaints called the Jar app "structurally opaque, legally unguaranteed and behaviourally manipulative and built on a culturally sensitive commodity—gold."

On January 16, 2026, police registered the FIR under the Banning of Unregulated Deposits Schemes (BUDS) Act. The probe was later handed over to the CID.

In defense, the company argued that it was merely an online micro-saving and investment platform by way of an application and not a deposit scheme in terms of the BUDS Act. It further submitted that the transaction on the app does not amount to a deposit under the Act.

Female leopard rescued

HALAGUR (MANDYA DIST), DHNS: A leopard, which had turned into a nightmare for the farmers of the region, fell into the trap laid by the Forest Department in Halagur on Tuesday night. The leopard had been attacking livestock at Nitturu, Konnapura, Joganahalli, Benamanahalli and other areas, and created panic among residents.

HC strikes down trial court order to provide home food to Darshan, other murder accused

BENGALURU, DHNS: The High Court of Karnataka has quashed a trial court order to provide home-cooked food to Kannada film star Darshan Thoogudeepa and other accused imprisoned in the Renukaswamy murder case.

Justice M Nagaprasanna ruled that though not prohibited for undertrial prisoners, home-cooked food can only be granted as per prison rules and that a medical advice must precede the order granting such facility.

"Medical advice must precede the grant of home-cooked food. Permission cannot be granted merely on request or as a matter of indulgence. The trial court's order is legally unsustainable as it directed the grant of home-cooked food without prior medical examination or recommendation. Granting such concessions indiscriminately would create chaos in prison management, as other inmates would also be entitled to similar treatment," Justice Nagaprasanna stated.

However, the court gave liberty to the accused to seek home-cooked food afresh, provided it was supported by medical advice and processed in accordance with the applicability of prison rules while bearing in mind the observations made by the Supreme Court while cancelling bail to the accused persons in the case.

The state government had challenged the trial court's order directing the Bengaluru Prison superintendent to provide home-cooked food to Darshan, his female friend and co-accused Pavithra Gowda and others.

The trial court initially had given this direction considering the oral submission made by three accused. However, in the subsequent hearing, upon clarification sought by the prison authorities, it passed another order directing the authorities to provide home-cooked food to other accused in the case as and when the doctor advised.

Digital prison menu

Expressing concern over quality and adequacy of prison food, the court directed the state to implement certain measures to ensure periodical inspections in the prisons.

"The protection of human dignity does not cease at the gates of the prison. The prisoners though deprived of liberty are entitled to basic necessities, a caveat, in accordance with law," said Justice Nagaprasanna.

The court has issued the direction for a digital publication of the prison menu.

"To safeguard the prisoners' rights and to ensure transparency, I deem it appropriate to direct the digital publication of the prison menu at conspicuous places, and the establishment of a complaint mechanism enabling prisoners to report deficiencies in food quality, inter alia, if one is not in place already," Justice Nagaprasanna said.

The court further said: "The medical officer or a designated dietitian shall conduct periodic inspection of the food prepared for the inmates and record their certification with regard to its quality, again intermittently. The state government shall issue a circular towards the procedure for the purpose of compliance with the directions."

CS seeks report on 'irregularities' in KPSC Mains exam

BENGALURU DHNS: Chief Secretary (CS) Shalini Rajneesh has sought a report from Karnataka Public Service Commission (KPSC) following the allegations of irregularities in the recently announced results of the main exams for 384 Gazetted Probationers posts under a 1:3 ratio.

Confirming this, K Jyothi, secretary of KPSC, said that the report will be submitted to the Chief Secretary on Thursday. "There were no irregularities in preparing the list of candidates eligible for the main exams to interview. Everything was done transparently, and the allegations are baseless. Those who are raising allegations must submit their issues officially to the Commission, and we will verify the same."

Jyothi clarified that the Commission is internally verifying the allegations raised. "The main reason for suspicion was that at least 10 to 12 candidates were selected from a single examination room. When over 5,700 candidates wrote the main exams and 24 members in each room, it is common for 10 to 12 candidates to be selected from one room, and there is no corruption in it," she stated.

In May 2025, the main exams to fill 384 posts were held, and 1,152 candidates on the basis of a 1:3 ratio were selected for interview. Some candidates have shared the selection list on various social media platforms and raised allegations of irregularities, mentioning that several candidates appeared from the same exam room selected for the interview.

Home Minister G Parameshwara said, "There have been complaints against KPSC recruitment for several years now. If such instances are repeating, someone from the Commission should take responsibility. When the government is all set to fill 50,000 posts, such allegations should be verified and clarified."

Unesco heritage committee to visit Hampi in April

PAVAN KUMAR H
HUBBALLI, DHNS

In 2001, the international committee on monuments and sites had to intervene to prevent the construction of a bridge near Virupaksha temple on the banks of Tungabhadra river.

Unesco's World Heritage Committee is likely to visit Hampi in the second week of April to assess the conservation status of the Vijayanagara kingdom's monuments.

A senior officer told *DH* that the reactive monitoring committee was visiting the world heritage site following complaints of monument mismanagement and perceived threats from development works.

Hampi attracts one of the highest numbers of visitors in the state. However, it has recently been in the news for all the wrong reasons, including vandalism of monuments, the collapse of a portion of Saalu Mantapa, gangrape of a foreign woman tourist and a local homestay owner and the murder of a male tourist from Odisha.

A team of the International Council on Monuments and Sites is visiting Hampi after a 25-year gap.

In 2001, the international committee had to intervene to prevent the construction of a bridge near Virupaksha temple on the banks of the Tungabhadra river.

In April, the team, consisting of international-level experts, is expected to visit all protected monuments in the core and buffer zones of the heritage site and note the threats to these structures.

Endangered tag

"If the committee feels there is a perceived threat to the existence of these historical monuments, it could issue a notice seeking measures the state will take to protect the outstanding universal value of the monuments. If the authorities concerned, in this case state government and ASI, fail to provide a satisfactory plan of action, Unesco could place Hampi on endangered list," said a highly placed source.

There are over 1,250 historical sites within the world heritage area, including 57 centrally protected monuments.

While the state government must conserve and restore the remaining monuments, locals allege that many sites have already been damaged or lost their character due to negligence.

"Thanks to recognition by Unesco, construction activity in the core zone has been restricted — a step that is safeguarding the heritage landscape," said Krishna Devaraya, a descendant of the Vijayanagara dynasty.

He said numerous illegal resorts and unauthorised structures had come up in and around Hampi.

Krishna Devaraya said they must be identified and removed to maintain the sanctity and authenticity of the region. Illegal stone quarrying also poses a threat to Hampi's legacy, he said.

"A comprehensive master plan guidelines should be implemented. Local communities should be encouraged and empowered to promote sustainable tourism. Strict action must be taken against anyone violating regulations or engaging in illegal activities," he said, adding that adequate public infrastructure, including clean restrooms and drinking water facilities, should be provided to tourists.

Hampi World Heritage Area Management Authority commissioner Ramesh Vatgal said financial constraints were the main hurdle in conserving and protecting monuments.

CCTV cameras

"We need to address issues like solid waste management, drinking water, cleanliness and security of visitors and monuments. We will send a proposal to the state government for the installation of CCTV cameras and a centralised monitoring for better protection".

Ramesh said even during the previous visit, the Unesco team had made several suggestions to improve the visitor experience at Hampi.

"Several of the suggestions have not been implemented yet," he said.

Tourism department secretary Thrilok Chandra K V said the dates for the Unesco team's visit had not yet been finalised.

"The team is expected to make suggestions and we will implement them. The government has taken several measures to improve facilities for visitors. The clearance of unauthorised homestays and resorts in the core and buffer zones is a step in the right direction".

He said the speedy verdict in the gangrape and murder cases at Sanapur had sent a stern warning, and the death penalty could act as a deterrent.

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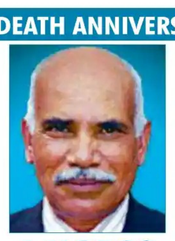

A.V.REGO
Born:08.06.1938 Died:05.03.2006

Time flies fast. Life goes on at its own pace. But some memories can never be forgotten or erased from the mind of the dearest ones. You will always remain in our thoughts

Irene Rego & Family

BRIMS forensic dept HoD dies by suicide

BIDAR, DHNS: Sunil Tapse (58), the head of the department of Forensic Sciences at Bidar Institute of Medical Sciences (BRIMS), was found hanging from the window grills of his quarter here on Tuesday.

According to police, Tapse had slipped into depression due to health issues, which they suspect, could have driven him to suicide. A suicide note, purportedly written by Tapse, stated that no one was responsible for his death and that he took the drastic step due to health problems, the police said. His colleagues and the staff in the department remember Tapse, a native of Maharashtra, a soft-spoken and affable. He had made a good name for himself in the department, they said.

IN LOVING MEMORY OF

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Those we love don't go away, they walk beside us every day. Unseen, unheard but always near.
By: Late Kote. N.G.Chandra Reddy & Sons Doddanekkundi, Bangalore – 37

Congress sinks in public eye, but BJP has no coherent counter narrative

ANALYSIS

Power tussle, scams plague ruling party; complacency may hit saffron party's chances

As Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar remain locked in a prolonged tug-of-war, the optics hardly inspire confidence ahead of future polls. DH FILE PHOTO

PRATHIMA NANDAKUMAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

The ruling Congress in Karnataka is not only grappling with uncertainty over the much-talked-about power transfer, but also appears unsure of retaining power in 2028.

As Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and his deputy and KPCC chief D K Shivakumar remain locked in a prolonged tug-of-war, the optics hardly inspire confidence ahead of future polls.

Public statements from legislators of both camps betray unease.

A recent dinner hosted to mark Magadi MLA H C Balakrishna's birthday became the latest in a series of political huddles.

Legislators from the old Mysore region, largely Vokkaligas aligned with Shivakumar, signalled a possible "numbers game" post-Budget.

"Whenever we go to our constituency, we hear the same discussion. We are irritated. We want the high command to intervene. We cannot face elections amid confusion," Balakrishna said, warning it would damage (the party's) prospects. He added that despite the five guarantees, the power-sharing issue could prove a setback.

Former minister K N Rajanna, a Siddaramaiah loyalist, admitted confusion prevails but downplayed its impact.

"Who says the Congress will come to power in 2028? There is still time. In politics, anything can happen. I only hope the freebies help us win," he remarked.

Amid revived demands for a "dalit CM," dalit ministers have opposed Shivakumar's claim based solely on organisational work.

"If dues are discussed, senior leader G Parameshwara too had served eight years as state party chief. Shivakumar completes six years on March 30 and is yet to break Parameshwara's record," said Rajanna, who had, earlier, suggested Shivakumar should focus on leading the party to victory in 2028 and serve a full term.

Shivakumar's repeated assertion that he expects his "due" from the high command for rebuilding the party fuels speculation that he views this as a narrow window for his chief ministerial ambitions.

Hosting a March 10 dinner to mark six years as KPCC chief signals he may step down from the party post and position himself as successor to Siddaramaiah.

"I have confidence in myself. Whatever is destined will come at the right time. The party needs new blood," he said.

To placate dissent, the government has expanded the Cabinet and made minister of state (MoS)-rank appointments across 149 boards and corporations.

Yet, resentment grows over shrinking development funds amid the Rs 52,000 crore annual guarantee outlays.

Add to this the alleged scams in Maharshi Valmiki Scheduled Tribes Development Corporation and the excise department and the diversion of SCP/TSP funds, internal quota backlog and contractors' "commission" charges, party insiders warn of a narrative resembling the BJP's 2023 "40% commission" rout.

The saffron party's campaigns over MUDA, excise and other scams have yet to decisively shift public mood.

For instance, the campaign against kickbacks backfired after the arrest by the Lokayukta of BJP MLA Chandru Lamani.

Senior BJP leaders admit that complacency within the Opposition must give way to a coordinated strategy.

Without sharper political messaging and sustained pressure on issues of instability and governance drift, the BJP risks squandering an opportunity even as Congress battles internal strife.

Implement internal quota or face protests, Vijayendra warns govt

BENGALURU, DHNS: Karnataka BJP president B Y Vijayendra on Wednesday warned the ruling Congress of launching a massive stir if the state government failed to implement internal reservation among the Scheduled Castes (SCs) for the proposed recruitment of 56,432 government employees.

The BJP wants all vacancies in the government filled, said Vijayendra. Pointing out that it was the government's prerogative to recruit either 50,000 or 1,00,000 employees, Vijayendra added, "But the BJP government increased reservation to 56% and ensured internal reservation. Oppressed communities should be given opportunities through internal reservation."

The state government's decision to go ahead with the recruitment drive sans internal reservation has triggered protests by members of the Madiga community, who have been fighting for internal reservation for many decades now.

Incidentally, the Basavaraj Bommai-led BJP government had raised the reservation cap from 50% to 56%, with reservation for SCs going up from 15% to 17%, and that of Scheduled Tribes (STs) rising from 3% to 7%. The BJP had also announced that it would follow the recommendations made by the Madhuswamy committee for structuring its internal reservation matrix, although the Supreme Court gave its nod for states to proceed with internal reservation only in August 2024, more than a year after the BJP lost power in Karnataka. The decision to raise the reservation cap to 56% has been challenged in the court since it is in violation of the 50% rule set by the Supreme Court in the Indra Sawhney case.

Accusing Chief Minister Siddaramaiah of betraying oppressed communities, Vijayendra said, "If he (Siddaramaiah) has any concern for SCs and STs, he must not give the lame excuse that the case is pending before the courts; he should ensure justice by providing jobs. This attitude that the government has adopted, of pinching the child and then swinging the cradle, is a crime."

Failure to implement internal reservation would make the CM responsible for the ensuing consequences, warned Vijayendra, urging him to take a decision on the issue.

Meanwhile, the state Cabinet is slated to meet on Thursday, where the contentious issue is expected to be discussed.

HAMPI SOAKS IN MYRIAD COLOURS

Hundreds of foreigners, along with the locals, soak in the vibrant spirit of Holi, the festival of colours, amidst the ruins of Hampi, on Wednesday. DH PHOTO/LAVA K

DH Classifieds

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Change of Name

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CHANGE OF NAME
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I, SHIKHA Mittal R/O H330, Brigade Lakefront Apartments, Whitefield, Bengaluru 560048 have changed my minor son's name from Harsh Vardhan to Harsh Vardhan Mitra (DOB: 28.11.2011). Affidavit dated 26.02.2026 notary Yankoba, Bengaluru

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I, AKBAR PASHA MOHAMED GHOUSE, residing at No.127, 1st Main, 5th Cross, S.K.Garden,Bilwaradahalli, Bengaluru - 560083, have changed my name to AKBAR PASHA vide affidavit dated 03-03-2026 before notary L. Puttaraju, Bengaluru. Henceforth I shall be called as AKBAR PASHA only

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No: UDA/TCP/LV(3)/GIS & IT/2026 (E-2067462) Date:25.02.2026

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The Commissionerate of Urban Development Authorities and Town and Country Planning invites applications from talented, qualified, and dedicated candidates seeking a professional career for the various posts listed below. These posts will be filled on a contractual basis for a period of one year through outsourcing. Based on the performance evaluation at the end of the first year, candidates demonstrating satisfactory performance may be continued further depending on the requirement. Candidates may apply for any one of the posts listed below based on their preference and experience. Last date to submit applications: **25-03-2026, 5:30 PM (IST)**
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1	Link to submit application for GIS Consultant positions	https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeKORrjXYCUh2v7uH-sav14jyBTf_hYtSE93YNbwSXPuS7ssA/viewform?usp=publish-editor
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GIS Consultant

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- Manage and maintain organizational data.
- Travel within the state when required for field visits and meetings.
- Perform any other responsibilities assigned by the Commissionerate & DTCP.

Requirements

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- Master's degree holders with 3+ years of experience.
- Experience working with software such as ArcGIS, QGIS, and AutoCAD.
- Experience in data collection and data analysis.
- Minimum 3 years of experience in urban planning projects.
- Ability to present technical information clearly and concisely (reports/presentations) with excellent proficiency in English.

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DIPR/CP/JA/5962/2025-26

Kharge recommends amicable settlement amid internal quota rift

Both factions stick to their stands; to be discussed in Cabinet today

BENGALURU, DHNS

Amid an intensifying rift between SC (Right) and SC (Left) factions within the ruling Congress over internal reservation, a delegation of senior SC (Left) leaders on Wednesday urged AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge to resolve the issue.

The delegation included Food and Civil Supplies Minister K H Muniyappa and Excise Minister R B Thimmapur. The SC (Left)/Madiga community, which has for decades fought for internal reservation, has vehemently opposed the state government's decision to recruit 56,432 jobs without providing internal reservation. Incidentally, Kharge hails from the SC (Right) community, which has favoured recruitment without providing internal reservation.

Speaking to reporters after meeting Kharge, Muniyappa said: "(AICC) President Kharge ji has asked us to amicably resolve these together so that no one suffers. He has no problem with it and has said even he will speak about it. Everyone should be together and share equally. We have agreed to it and will convey this to the chief minister."

He noted that the issue would also be brought to the notice of Home Minister G Parameshwara and Social Welfare Minister Dr H C Mahadevappa, two senior ministers from the SC (Right) in the Siddaramaiah Cabinet. However, Muniyappa was non-committal about what the exact formula for "equal distribution" would be if the 17% quota for SCs is reduced to 15%. According to sources, proportional reduction of the 6-6-5 formula would result in the 5.5-5.5-4 formula.

Meanwhile, the Karnataka State Federation of Right Communities has urged the state government to continue recruitment without internal reservation till the High Court gives its verdict on the issue.

The matter is expected to be deliberated in detail in the Cabinet meeting on Thursday.

Where is data to provide internal quota for 15%?: Priyank

IT/BT Minister and Mallikarjun Kharge's son Priyank Kharge defended the Cabinet's decision on not including internal reservation in the ongoing recruitment drive, stating that there was no empirical data to provide internal reservation for 15%.

When asked about the Madiga community's demand, Priyank said: "Okay, let's do something but what is the method? There are 6 cases. There's one case on 56%, another on internal reservation. Let there be an order (by the court), we will consider it."

Noting that many cases were pending in the courts, the minister wondered what the government's mistake was.

"There are 6 writ petitions. If we keep adding to it, how can we build the future of our kids? We are responsible not just to one community but to everyone, even though our communities need more emphasis because of deprivation. You need a constitutional solution, a legal resolution for this."

Others need Budget, we don't, says Shivakumar

BENGALURU, DHNS: Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar on Wednesday said he did not need the state Budget to undertake development works in his Bengaluru south district.

"There's no need to have expectations from the Budget. With or without the Budget, we're doing our work," Shivakumar said.

Shivakumar was responding to a question on what people in his district can expect from the 2026-27 budget that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will present on March 6. Shivakumar had skipped pre-budget meetings with Siddaramaiah.

"Others need the Budget. We don't. It's not that we need to take up works only if they're announced in the Budget," Shivakumar said.

The deputy chief minister cited the examples of the flagship Karnataka Public Schools (KPS) in Bengaluru South district.

"No other district in India has 25 government schools, each one costing Rs 15 crore. Was this in the Budget? We've done it," he said.

During the JD(S)-Congress coalition government in 2018-19, Shivakumar said a medical college was announced for the Bengaluru south (then Ramanagar) district.

"But the next BJP government under B S Yediyurappa took the medical college to Chikkaballapur. Now, we've given medical colleges to both Ramanagar and Kanakapura," he said.

Davangere DC residence gets hoax bomb call

DAVANGERE, DHNS: A bomb threat call received at the official residence of the deputy commissioner G M Gangadharaswamy turned out to be a hoax after verification on Wednesday.

The emergency helpline 112 received a call around 2.40 pm that a bomb had been planted at the DC's residence at Nijalingappa Layout. The bomb detection and disposal squad and dog squad conducted a check for more than an hour. No explosives were found in the residence.

The DC had gone to duty after the lunch and his mother was at the residence.

Thalassemia patients press for job quota under Disabilities Act

'Disability can't be quantified in genetic disorders for reservation'

AMULLYA SHIVASHANKAR
BENGALURU, DHNS

Patients of thalassemia don't just battle the disease, but are also fighting for reservation in government jobs and grappling with a lack of quality medicines in government hospitals after Covid.

The Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016, provides reservation in jobs for people with disability of more than 40%.

However, people with blood disorders such as hemophilia, thalassemia and sickle cell anemia were not included in the reservation despite repeated requests to central and state governments.

"If we are not getting benefits, there is no point in being under the Act. Unlike other disabilities, we cannot quantify such disorders as a percentage to prove it to the government. We have been continuously asking for reservation as this will ease discrimination and increase employment opportunities, but there has been no response," Gagandeep Singh Chandok, president of Thalassaemia and Sickle Cell Society of Bangalore, told *DH*.

Dr Rasmi Palassery, consultant, department of medical oncology, said, "Like deafness, blindness, or locomotive disability, we can't gauge the disability. These are genetic disorders. There are many associated health issues and the patients receive regular blood transplantation. But there is no job reservation".

This is probably because of the failure to understand the challenges faced by patients with blood disorders.

Cases have been filed in the Supreme Court, but judgements are awaited, she said.

A thalassaemia patient said, "Blood transfusion and medicines are expensive and employment is a necessity for us. Though there is a law against discrimination, enforcement is weak and people do not employ us easily. Reservation is a hope".

On treatment and costs, Dr Anoop P, senior consultant hematologist, said, "Depending on severity, blood transfusion is needed every 4 to 6 weeks. The blood transfusion per session costs about Rs 4,000, and the donor's blood needs to be screened thoroughly for any infections and HIV".

Employer understanding, family support and access to good healthcare are necessary for patients to complete their education, work in professional fields and lead independent lives, he added.

The society president said the quality of iron chelation tablets provided in government hospitals had declined after Covid.

"The medicines available after Covid are generic medicines unlike good quality medicines we received before Covid. Also, the supply chain was uninterrupted earlier, now there are discrepancies," Gagandeep said.

Bescom plans command centre to ward off cyber attacks

Bescom, From Page 1

That apart, protecting the systems becomes even more important after Bescom implements smart metering since the power utility will be able to send out alerts and even disconnect power remotely once smart metering is implemented.

The upcoming command centre will have a ten-member team closely monitoring the Bescom IT infrastructure, including close to 2,000 computer systems used by its staff. This way, any threat or attack will immediately be flagged and averted, officials said.

"The centre will run round the clock with analysts monitoring every system and the complete IT infrastructure. Any unusual activity will be examined and if a threat or an attack is detected, action will be taken immediately," a senior Bescom official explained.

The system is also important to prevent downtime during operations, officials said.

"Sometimes, the attacks or threats may be small but the impact on downtime would be significant. Since we are in the public domain and run essential services, real-time monitoring of threats and averting them is also important to ensure that the downtime is less," another official said.

There have been instances of fraudsters using the name of Bescom to target consumers. In some cases, attackers, claiming to be Bescom officials, sent out links and apk files to consumers, asking them to use these links and apps to pay bills.

"We have been conducting awareness campaigns to ensure that people don't fall prey to it. The number of incidents has come down relatively since people now know about such frauds," a senior official noted.

Growing admin costs to hog...

Budget, From Page 1

As Leader of the Opposition, Siddaramaiah was the flagbearer for administrative weight-loss as he kept haranguing the then-BJP government to cut unnecessary costs. Under Siddaramaiah, however, revenue expenditure has risen 42% since 2023-24 when he became chief minister for his second term.

According to public finance expert Madhusudhan BV Rao, committed expenditure on social sector spending — education, public health and so on — will have dividends. "But is bulging revenue expenditure resulting in enhanced efficiency or productivity?" Rao asked, calling for measures like pay-for-performance for government staff.

Some decisions — cutting or rationalising subsidies, for example — need political will. By the end of the current 2025-26 fiscal, the government would have spent Rs 79,925 crore on subsidies, up 27% since 2023-24. The biggest subsidy component is free power for irrigation pumpsets. The finance department has been asking the government to consider stricter limits on rich farmers.

Rao warned that rising committed expenditure would hit developmental spending. "When most of the revenue expenditure is committed, what else will you be left with?" he said. "You won't have space to make tweaks, especially if there are no additional resources."

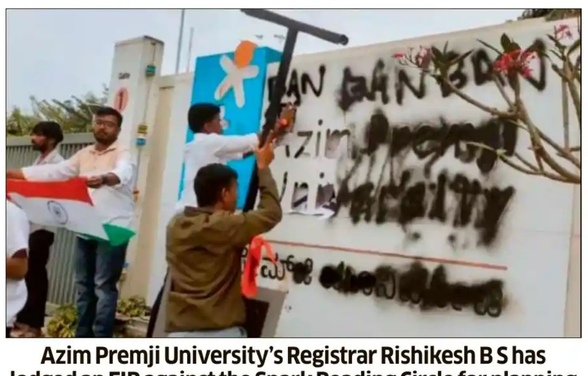
Academics urge Azim Premji University to withdraw FIR against reading circle

BENGALURU, DHNS

Over 400 academics and students, including intellectuals, such as Niveditha Menon, Prabhat Patnaik, Janaki Nair and Zoya Hassan, have urged the Azim Premji University to "secure closure" of FIRs against Spark Reading Circle.

The university's registrar Rishikesh B S had lodged an FIR against the Spark Reading Circle for planning a discussion on the Kunan Poshpora mass rape case of 1991. This had led to alleged trespassing, assault and vandalism by members of the ABVP, the student wing of the RSS.

In the FIR, the registrar claimed that the circle had not sought permission to hold the event, and accused it of "creating enmity between two communities." The university has stood its ground that the event was not authorised.



Azim Premji University's Registrar Rishikesh B S has lodged an FIR against the Spark Reading Circle for planning a discussion on the Kunan Poshpora mass rape case of 1991, which later led to vandalism on the campus.

Taking exception to the university's action, 411 signatories argued in a letter that converting matters of procedure, event approvals and internal disagreements into criminal allegations risks conflating debate or administrative lapse with illegality and introduces the "threat of state coercion into the heart of academic life."

Instrument of last resort

"Criminal law is an instrument of last resort. It must not be used to regulate student expression, to manage reputational anxiety, or to appease violent disruption by external political actors. Escalating a matter of campus governance into an FIR exposes students to the coercive machinery of the carceral state and risks permanently damaging the culture of trust and intellectual freedom essential to academic life," the letter noted.

The letter concluded by saying: "Moments of crisis test institutions. We urge the university to act swiftly to restore confidence within its community and uphold the principles it has long espoused."

Govt contests RBI's estimate of state's liabilities

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Siddaramaiah administration on Wednesday contested the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) estimate that Karnataka's outstanding liabilities will touch Rs 8.14 lakh crore for the fiscal ending this March.

"The figure of Rs 8.14 lakh crore reported externally overstates the state's liabilities, and the correct figure of state total liability is likely to be 7,64,655 crore at the end of 2025-26," read the statement issued by the Finance Department, which is helmed by CM Siddaramaiah.

The Finance Department said that about Rs 60,500 crore was incorrectly reflected as part of the state's liabilities.

Speculations swirl over Nitish Kumar's RS entry

Nitish Kumar, From Page 1

The move took everyone by surprise as people were celebrating Holi.

"Amid all the discussions over permutations and combinations, it was decided in principle that if Nitish moves to Rajya Sabha, the BJP, the single largest party in the 243-member House, will have its own chief minister in Bihar, a state where it has failed to have its CM so far," said a senior NDA leader on condition of anonymity.

"Under such an arrangement, it is quite likely that Nitish's son Nishant, an engineering graduate, who has kept a low profile and stayed away from active politics, may be anointed as Deputy CM," sources added.

Bihar will have five vacancies for the Rajya Sabha seats in April. For the biennial election to the Upper House, the NDA has 202 MLAs in the 243-member House, sufficient to win the four seats (as 41 MLAs' support is required to win one seat).

For the fifth seat, it will have a surplus of 38 votes but will still be short of three members in case a contest takes place.

US sinks Iranian ship off Lanka...

Lanka, From Page 1

In Colombo, Navy spokesperson Commander Buddhika Sampath said several bodies were also found near the location of the distress signal. "As the the bodies were found closer to the point of distress, it is accepted that they were from the same ship," he said.

"When our teams reached the scene, we observed a large oil slick, indicating that the ship had sunk," Sampath added.

Although the incident occurred outside Sri Lankan territorial waters, it fell within the island nation's search and rescue zone, Sampath said, adding that the vessel was Iranian and the rescued crew members were wearing Iranian naval uniforms.

Sri Lankan Foreign Minister Vijitha Herath told Parliament that the Sri Lanka Navy and Coast Guard received an emergency message at 5.08 am regarding a sinking ship named IRIS Dena, located about 40 nautical miles off the southern port district of Galle.

"Thirty of them were rescued while around 180 were said to be on board," he said.

Former Indian Navy Chief Admiral Arun Prakash condemned the strike. "Sinking of an Iranian warship off the southern tip of Sri Lanka, with heavy loss of life is a senseless and inflammatory act. Initiating another dimension of violence in this open-ended conflict will spread alarm across the high seas and disrupt global seaborne commerce. Condemnable!" Admiral Prakash wrote in a social media post.

Chinnaswamy upgrade: Panel says KSCA...

KSCA, From Flap

Further, the committee was kept in the dark about the press release and the press conference on Tuesday, the sources said, adding that a joint press meet with the chairman of the committee would have evoked more confidence in the public.

"The decision to implement the recommendations was the KSCA's. The dates were decided by them. Now, either they haven't complied with the recommendations or are seeking an extension," the sources said.

"These are the main points of contention: The timeline committed by KSCA does not evoke satisfaction with the actual work done, fixing of responsibility and gaps with their communication and actual work done. On a scale of 1-10, the current progress is only 2 or 3."

When asked, committee chairman Maheshwar Rao said the progress was being monitored. "The committee is continuously working with the KSCA team to monitor the progress and ensure that the recommendations are implemented well within the stipulated deadline," he told *DH*.

In his response, Santhosh Menon, secretary, KSCA, told *DH*: "If at all the expert committee has found something lagging, the KSCA assures that the agreed timeline will be adhered to."

Danta Bhagya now under AB-ArK scheme

BENGALURU, DHNS: The Health department on Wednesday announced Danta Bhagya scheme for partial and complete dentures to be included under the Arogya Bharat PMJAY-CM Arogya Karnataka (AB-ArK) scheme through Suvarna Arogya Suraksha Trust (SAST).

SAST will adopt uniform package rates as per the existing rates under the scheme for complete dentures and partial dentures for SAST-empanelled government and private hospitals.

Under the Danta Bhagya scheme, people who are 45 years and above, with three or more missing teeth, are eligible. The price for partial dentures is fixed at Rs 1,000 and complete dentures at Rs 3,000 and is uniform across all the government and empanelled private dental colleges.

ನಗರಸಭಾ ಕಾರ್ಯಾಲಯ, ಉಡುಪಿ

ಉನಸ:ಬಿ4:ಟಿಆರ್:2025–26 ದಿನಾಂಕ: 04.03.2026

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ಸಹಿ/– ಪೌರಾಯುಕ್ತರು,
ಉಡುಪಿ ನಗರಸಭೆ

BENGALURU CENTRAL CITY CORPORATION
Office of the Executive Engineer, Shanthinagar Division.
P.U. Building, 9th Floor, M.G. Road, Bangalore - 560 001

No.EE/SN/TEND/23/2025-26 Date: 04.03.2026

(Two Cover Tender-KW 3) (Through GOK Kppp Portal only)

The Executive Engineer (Shanthinagara) invites tenders from eligible tenderers for the works details in the table given below. The Tenderers may submit tenders for any or all of the works given in the table in appropriate class registered in Bangalore Central City Corporation /CPWD /KPWD/Railways /MES / any State or Central Govt. organization (Standard Tender Document Kw3). Tender documents may be downloaded from Government of Karnataka e-Procurement website **https://eproc.karnataka.gov.in/kppp portal/index.seam** under login for Contractors.

Sl. No.	Name of the Work/Approximate value (Rs in Lakhs)/EMD amount in Rs.
1	Improvements to Roads, Drain and footpath at Bannerghatta road and Surrounding area in ward No 166 Shanthinagara (Old No 117) Call-2. Approximate value **Rs. 60.00 Lakhs,** EMD : **Rs.1,20,000/-** Category : **OTHERS.**
2	Improvements to Roads, Drain and footpath at Rama krishna garden, Munnigowda garden and Surrounding area in Ward No.168 Neelasandra (Old No 116) for the year 2025-26 Call-2. Approximate value **Rs. 60.00 Lakhs,** EMD : **Rs.60,000/-**Category : **ST.**
3	Improvements To Roads and Drains at Census Block No 61,63/2,63/1 in Ward No 171 Domlur Call-2. Approximate value **Rs. 99.00 Lakhs,** EMD : **Rs.1,98,000/-**Category : **OTHERS.**

Calender of events :
1) Pre bid meeting will be held on **09.03.2026 at 15.30 hrs** in the Office of the Exe Engineer East Zone, 9th Floor, PU Building, Bengaluru-560001.
2) Last date submission of tender documents on or before **13/03/2026 at 16.00 hours**
3) Technical Bids will be opened on **:16.03.2026 at 16.30 hours**

Sd/- Executive Engineer, Shanthinagar Division, BCCC.

Bangalore Electricity Supply Company Limited
(Wholly owned Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
(CIN: U04010KA2002SGC030438)

SHORT-TERM TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through KPP Portal)

Tenders are invited for 11 KV Evacuation New Feeder works pertaining to Magadi, Kudur and Tavarekere sub Divisions in Magadi Division of Ramanagara Circle on "Partial Turnkey basis on Rate Contract Basis" of BESCOM, Bengaluru through GoK Karnataka Public Procurement Portal.

Sl. No.	Enq. No.	Name of the work	Aprox. Amount put to Tender in Rs. Lakhs	Last date for submitting the bids
1	SEE/ RMGC / PTK RC- 11 KV EVE / MGD -305 Dt: 03.03.2026.	Running 11 kv Link Line from 66/11 KV Shivanasandra MUSS to Thigalarapalya village to reduce the overload of MF-3 Kalya feeder in O & M - 2 section, Magadi Sub division.	30.72	16.03.2026 up to 16:00 Hrs.
2	SEE/ RMGC / PTK RC- 11 KV EVE / TAV -306 Dt: 03.03.2026.	Evacuation of new 11 KV feeder from Kodigehalli MUSS to janapriya Township to reduce overload of KF-06, Janapriya feeder in Machohalli O & M section Tavarekere Sub division.	155.54	23.03.2026 up to 16:00 Hrs.
3	SEE/ RMGC / PTK RC-11 KV EVE / KUD-307 Dt: 03.03.2026.	Running New Agri Feeder from Shivanasandra MUSS to Avoid over loading & Crossing of existing KF-6 Madigondanahalli Agri Feeder from Kudur MUSS in Kudur O & M section of Kudur Sub division to improve the reliability and to reduce the T & D loss.	8.38	16.03.2026 up to 16:00 Hrs.
4	SEE/ RMGC / PTK RC- 11 KV EVE / KUD -308 Dt: 03.03.2026	Running new NJY feeder from Shivanasandra MUSS to avoid overloading & Crossing of existing KF-14 Hujenahalli feeder from Kudur MUSS in Kudur O & M section of Kudur Sub division to improve the reliability and to reduce the T & D loss.	29.52	16.03.2026 up to 16:00 Hrs.
5	SEE/ RMGC / PTK RC- 11 KV EVE / TAV -309 Dt: 03.03.2026.	Evacuation of new 11 KV feeder from Dodderi 66/11 KV MUSS to Lakkaiahnapalya village to bifurcate the load of DCF-9 Gopalanagara feeder which is feeding from Dodderi MUSS in Chandrappa Circle section of Tavarekere Sub division.	78.91	16.03.2026 up to 16:00 Hrs.
6	SEE/ RMGC / PTK RC- 11 KV EVE / TAV -310 Dt: 03.03.2026	Evacuation of new 11 KV line from Donnenahalli MUSS to Chunchanakuppe village for load bifurcation from DF-10 Chunchanakuppe feeder to new feeder in Chandrappa circle section of Tavarekere Sub division.	14.56	16.03.2026 up to 16:00 Hrs.

The Bid available from **09.03.2026** All the payments such as tender cost, EMD etc. shall be made through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal through e-payment mode. For details, please visit website: **kpppusers@karnataka.gov.in.** Further any clarification contact help desk **09240214000 & 09240214001** or E-mail **support@eprochelpdesk.com** and **080-23500164 or 9449844798**.

Sd/-
Superintending Engineer (El), RMGC, Kengeri BESCOM.

For Electricity related complaints call: 1912
Download BESCOM Mithra Mobile APP

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
(CIN: U40109KA1999SGC025521)
No: CGM(Tech)/DGM(PROC &APCC)/EE-Proc/AEE-1/2025-26/4442-459 Date: 04.03.2026

BRIEF TENDER NOTIFICATION (Through KPPP mode only)

KPTCL invites Bids (on percentage rate basis) on electronic mode for the following works in a **Combined Package** against following Enquiry Number:

Enquiry number/ Name of the Work

KPTCL/2025-26/SS/WORK_INDENT3420

Combined Package for,
Work-A: Creating 33kV reference by providing additional 1x20MVA,110/33-11kV Power Transformer at **110/11kV Yadwad sub-station** in Gokak Taluk, Belagavi District.
Work-B: Creating 33kV reference by providing additional 1x20MVA,110/33-11kV Power Transformer at **220kV Esale sub-station** Sirsi Taluk, Uttara Kannada District.
Work-C: Providing additional 1x20MVA, 110/33-11kV Power Transformer at **110kV Kiruvatti sub-station** in Yallapura Taluk, Uttara Kannada District.
Work-D: Creating 33kV reference by providing additional 1x20MVA, 110/33-11kV Power Transformer at **110kV Bidi sub-station** in Khanapur Taluk, Belagavi District.
on **Total Turnkey Basis,** including Supply of all Materials/Equipments and Erection (including dismantling & Civil Works) of all Materials/Equipments, Testing and Commissioning.
The bids will be received through KPP Portal only. The details regarding participation in the e-tendering process can be obtained by logging on to KPTCL website **https://kptcl.karnataka.gov.in** with hyperlink "E Procurement KPTCL" or **https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in** on or after **06.03.2026 at 15:00 hrs.** Last date & time for receipt of Bids is **06.04.2026 at 15:00 hrs**. **Any extension of Due date for Bid submission will be intimated in the Karnataka Public Procurement portal.** Any details required in this regard can also be had from the Office of the undersigned during Office hours.
All Corrigendum/Addendums shall be noticed by the bidders before the last date of submission of the Bids.

Sd/- Chief General Manager (Tech)., Corporate Office, KPTCL
11th Floor, Indhana Bhavan, A.R. Circle, Bengaluru - 09.

KARNATAKA STATE ELECTRONICS DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION LTD., KEONICS ISO 9001 : 2008
(A Government of Karnataka Enterprises)
No 59, 1st Floor, Kumara Park West, Railway Parallel Road, Seshadripuram, Bangalore - 560020.
+91-80-22225645 | info@keonics.com | www.keonics.in

No.: KSEDCL/FA/FD/001/2025-26 Date: 05.03.2026

REQUIRED-COMPANY SECRETARAY

Karnataka State Electronics Development Corporation Limited (KEONICS), an ISO 9001:2015 certified organization, has been in existence since 1976 with the sole objective of promoting electronics industries in Karnataka. KEONICS is involved in IT Infrastructure, IT Education, IT consultancy, IT training and networking, IT solutions span the areas of ERP solutions, web portals, software development. Currently KEONICS is looking for suitable candidates on contract basis for the post of Company Secretary.

Qualification and Experience: Candidates should be qualified ACS with degree from recognised UGC having post qualification experience as Company Secretary above three years. They should be a member of the Institution of Company Secretary of India. Preference will be given to the candidates who possess a degree or any equivalent qualification in Finance/Marketing borrowings.

Age - **30 - 50 Years**

Job Profile- Drafting of Agenda, Proceedings of Board/Committees/ AGM and other meetings, ROC, MCA and General Legal, Administration/HR matters, liaisoning with Government, Financial Institutions and Company correspondence.

Emoluments - Best in the industry, commensurate with qualification and experience.

If you have the drive and desire to be part of our initiative, please send your filled application form CV with photocopies of testimonials Certificates in proof with recent passport size photograph clearly mentioning the expected emoluments on or before **20.03.2026 upto 5.30 PM** via **email: info@keonics.com.** Applications received after the time specified will not be considered for selection procedure. Canvassing in any manner will disqualify the candidate. Shortlisted candidates will be informed to attend an interview in due course and any interim enquiries about the result are unnecessary and will not be attended to. The Corporation does not enter into correspondence with candidates regarding the reasons for their non-selection for interview /appointment. KEONICS reserves the right to Cancel/Postpone the notification without assigning any reason thereof.

Application can be downloaded from: **https://www.keonics.in**

Sd/-
DIPR/CP/5996/SA/2025-26 Managing Director, KEONICS, Bangalore

DECCAN HERALD
ESTABLISHED 1948

Textbook case: Criticism or contempt?

In the Supreme Court of India's criticism of a class 8 textbook that mentions corruption in the judiciary, there are signals of denial of any such erosion in institutional integrity. One of the lessons in the NCERT (National Council of Educational Research and Training) textbook provoked the Chief Justice of India (CJI), Justice Surya Kant, to register a *suo motu* case and to issue stern warnings. It discusses "corruption at various levels of the judiciary" and a "massive backlog" of cases in the courts. The CJI considered the references as contempt of court and ordered the immediate withdrawal of the textbooks. What adds a layer of intrigue here is the CJI's contention that the inclusion of the sub-chapter on corruption was a "conspiracy" against the judiciary. The NCERT has expressed regret and withdrawn all copies of the textbook. Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan has promised action against officials responsible for including the contentious sections.

The Court's disapproval may be seen as a selective response, even as an overreaction, leading to an act of censorship. Corruption in the judiciary has been a topic of public debate. The lesson quotes former CJI Justice B R Gavai himself as saying: "...sadly, there have been instances of corruption and misconduct that have surfaced even within the judiciary... potentially eroding faith in the integrity of the system as a whole." Charges against individual judges are in the public domain. It is debatable whether an 8th-standard student should have access to what is essentially an opinion about the issue. Middle-school students can be provided with facts, such as the high number of pending cases in courts. At their age, opinions risk being perceived as facts. But it still is a stretch to see contempt of court in the lesson.

The NCERT textbook row raises questions on the limits of public debate over alleged judicial corruption

While the NCERT prepares the textbooks, the government, which controls the council, is accountable for their content. On multiple occasions, the NCERT and the CBSE have pushed the government's political agenda by drafting syllabi that align with the dispensation's interests, removing or censoring parts of history, glorifying some, and demonising others. In this context, the textbook lesson may be seen as the government's criticism of the judiciary. It may be noted that the Court has not reacted so sharply to similar and even more damaging remarks made elsewhere. For the people, as stakeholders in State institutions, the critical question to ask is – does the Court's response smack of intolerance to a credible concern about alleged corruption in the judiciary?

Deep discrimination, cosmetic fix

The Karnataka government's decision to open a state-run barber shop for Dalits in Shingatalur village in Gadag district raises a basic question: when did the state enter the salon business? The move, widely projected as a progressive intervention against caste discrimination, is an admission of administrative failure, dressed up as welfare. The incident that prompted the decision is deeply shameful. Dalit residents were denied haircuts by local barbers belonging to the Hadapada community, who cited "religious tradition" linked to the village deity, claiming that serving Dalits would invite misfortune. When authorities intervened, barbers shut shop in protest rather than obey the law. Faced with defiance, the government chose to bypass the problem by creating a parallel service. This effectively legitimises untouchability by building new walls, rather than demolishing them.

Undeniably, the shop offers immediate relief. No citizen should be forced to travel to another village for something as basic as a haircut. But relief is not the same as justice. By opening a separate, government-run facility, the state risks institutionalising segregation. If discrimination in private salons is met by state-run alternatives, what next? Separate hotels, because Dalits are denied entry? Separate grocery stores? Separate temples? This workaround approach treats untouchability as an inconvenience to be managed, not a crime to be punished. Denial of service on caste grounds is a cognisable offence under the Protection of Civil Rights Act, 1955, and the SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act. The problem is not the absence of legal tools, but the reluctance to use them with the full force of law. Licences can be cancelled. Establishments can be sealed. Offenders can be arrested and prosecuted. Yet enforcement remains weak.

By opening a barber shop for Dalits, the Karnataka government misreads segregation as social justice

The rot is visible in conviction rates. National Crime Records Bureau data show that convictions under the Atrocities Act are only around 7% in Karnataka. Low convictions embolden offenders and signal that social boycotts carry little cost. There is also a greater social danger. State-run facilities – even those intended to be inclusive – may normalise exclusion in the public mind if they are perceived as "Dalit-specific" solutions. Equality cannot be delivered through partitions; it must be enforced in shared spaces. The answer lies in sustained education on equality, visible and swift punishment for violators, higher-quality investigations, and a sharp rise in convictions. The state must make discrimination economically and legally unviable, not administratively convenient. A government that prides itself on social justice cannot settle for cosmetic fixes. Its duty is not to cut hair, but to cut through caste.

CAPITAL GAINS

Municipal bonds and the promise of urban reform

The debt instruments can transform funding for India's cities, but transparency and creditworthiness will be key

DEVANSH KEDIA

India's cities need an estimated Rs 63 lakh crore in urban infrastructure investments between 2021 and 2036 (World Bank, 2022). To finance these needs, urban local governments (ULGs) continue to rely predominantly on central and state budgetary transfers, with limited contribution from their own-source revenues.

Bridging this gap requires ULGs to adopt debt financing instruments such as municipal bonds. The Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT) set the early momentum, while the new Urban Challenge Fund links grants to a city's ability to mobilise financing, fostering a credit culture (financial discipline and commitment to full and timely repayments) across ULGs. Forty-five metropolitan cities (with million-plus populations) that have stronger institutions, higher revenues, and greater economic dynamism are best positioned to lead this shift. FY 21-22 data from cityfinance.in shows these cities can potentially borrow about Rs 87,000 crore, yet less than 20% of this (Rs 18,000 crore) has been tapped so far.

Nearly all past issuances have come from these cities, accounting for under 10% of municipal borrowings. This underscores both their underutilisation and their potential as scalable debt instruments. After years of limited activity, the municipal bond market is gathering momentum. During the first ten months of FY 2025-26, twelve cities raised Rs 1,556 crore, marking the highest mobilisation by value and volume in nearly three decades.

Why do municipal bonds matter? They offer cities access to long-tenor, fixed-rate capital, often priced between concessional loans from multilaterals or state-level entities and commercial lending for creditworthy municipalities. Recent issuances demonstrate competitive pricing, with coupon rates ranging from 7.65% to 8.5%. These instruments shift reliance away from government guarantees to a city's revenue base, strengthening accountability for project execution and debt repayment. Compliance with SEBI's disclosure and reporting requirements institutionalises improvements in financial management and governance, strengthening city systems over time.

However, systemic gaps limit the deepening of municipal bond markets. First, the pipeline of creditworthy cities remains narrow. Regulatory norms and investor preferences favour highly rated bonds (AA- and above). Of the ₹470 cities rated in 2017, only 164 received an investment-grade rating (BBB- and above). Yet, only 22 cities have accessed the market, raising Rs 4,340 crore through 30 issuances over the last decade.

Second, many cities are not yet capital market-ready. They must build a steady pipeline of bankable projects and strengthen institutional capacities for sound financial management, transparent and timely publication

of accounts, and credible reporting on project execution to build market trust. Raising bonds requires professional expertise in financial structuring and post-issuance engagement – these are skills that remain scarce within city systems.

Limits of current incentives

Since 2017, AMRUT incentives have helped revive the municipal bonds market through interest subvention, reducing borrowing costs by up to 2.6% for medium-tenor bonds (around five years) and 1.3% for longer maturities (around ten years). However, most issuances remain anchored at Rs 200 crore, and the current design leans toward shorter tenors, missing the opportunity to attract long-term capital aligned with infrastructure lifecycles. After eight years, the incentive design needs a reset. The Rs-200 crore cap must be raised without expanding the incentive pool, linking it to revenue performance – with a portion released upfront and the remainder disbursed only upon measurable improvements in own-source revenues.

The Rs-100 crore incentive for a single Rs-1,000 crore issuance announced in the Union Budget 2026-27 seeks to encourage larger ticket-size issuances but is operationally viable only for the top ten metropolitan cities. For other cities, a pooled issuance could perhaps offer a pathway to tap this incentive.

Five measures can be adopted to strengthen the ecosystem. First, states and ULGs must prioritise improving their own revenue mobilisation, particularly through more rational pricing of urban services, to enhance creditworthiness and strengthen their debt-servicing capacity. A robust revenue foundation is critical for long-term sustainability.

Second, cities need credit-enhancement mechanisms such as upfront cash collateral and first-loss guarantee systems. Uttar Pradesh and Tamil Nadu have already improved ratings for nine cities, in total, through cash collateral mechanisms. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI)'s extension of partial credit enhancement (PCE) for municipal bonds, through its regulated entities (banks, NHB, NaBFID, HUDCO and IIFCL), addresses a long-standing market gap, which is expected to improve credit assessments and boost investor confidence.

Third, refinancing through bonds can lower borrowing costs, reduce interest rate volatility, and remove restrictive covenants, while giving cities access to longer-tenor capital that better aligns with infrastructure lifecycles. It can further support higher issuance volumes as the market deepens. SEBI may consider permitting refinancing through municipal bonds.

Fourth, state-level Urban Infrastructure Development and Finance Corporations (UIDFCs) should evolve into hubs for project preparation and financial structuring, with functional autonomy. Market finance divisions within the UIDFCs, staffed with experienced transaction advisors, can be strengthened to support cities in preparing bankable projects and meeting bond-related disclosure and compliance requirements.

Lastly, transparency in project execution and service delivery is essential to build market trust. Cities should publish project- and service-level data across the lifecycle to ensure clear trackability and credibility.

Financing alone is not enough. Municipal bonds can bridge key investment gaps, but only if revenues strengthen and transparency improves.

(The writer is a senior associate at Janaagraha)

RIGHT IN THE MIDDLE

Faster than the train

A free mind can make even the most ordinary journey extraordinary

SURENDER SINGH DUDI

I have travelled countless times by train to my village, but this journey felt slightly different. With the confidence of a seasoned traveller, I boarded a general coach—lacking cushy seats and decorative drapery yet carrying its own pride in simplicity. It was early morning; the atmosphere held a gentle calm. I settled into a window seat and withdrew into the privacy of my thoughts.

As the train moved from the suburbs into the countryside, the air through the open window felt perfectly balanced — soft enough to soothe, steady enough to be felt. Morning dew settled over green fields that stretched like a washed postcard in muted grey. The cold air nipped lightly at my face.

Even in modest public transport, without much luxury, I felt a strange detachment from the surroundings. A marble-like stillness formed in my eyes, the familiar signal that my mind had begun to drift. Images flashed through my imagination, each triggering a memory, and each memory branching into a dozen more. My thoughts travelled faster than the train, tumbling through memories, forming stories, collapsing into newer memories, and expanding into wild imaginings.

What might have been a dull, monotonous journey became strangely vivid —and soothing. When I tired of wandering thoughts, I turned to music within. I imagined my favourite songs playing exactly as I wanted them to sound, with the perfect equaliser settings that even premium ear buds fail to deliver.

Similarly, during my college days, long and tedious lectures often left the classroom dull and stifling. As my hand took notes, my ears pretended to listen, but my mind roamed free. It was a state of nimble wandering—untamed and alive. In the most boring lectures, poetry seemed to gush from all angles of my imagination. As time slipped away, ideas, memories, stories and imagined scenes flowed effortlessly. Lectures that seemed monotonous to the other students became a playground for my thoughts. I rarely glanced at my watch, even during the most obscure lectures.

In *Mahabharata*'s Yakshaprashna episode, during the Pandavas' exile, four brothers fall after drinking water from a forbidden pond. When Yudhishtira confronts the Yaksha, he is tested through a series of questions on life, duty, and wisdom. Among these, one stands out. The Yaksha asks, "What is the fastest thing in the world?" Yudhishtira replies, "The human mind."

Nothing surpasses the speed of thought—swift, boundless and immeasurable. The mind can transform the dullest journey or the most tedious lecture into a world of colour, music, and reflection. It explores, imagines, and creates boundless trails of untamed thought.

A sudden beam of morning sun struck my face as the train took a sharp turn, and my thoughts shifted once again. In that moment, I felt it clearly; a free mind alone can make even the most ordinary journey extraordinary.

Whether on a slow train or in a boring lecture, the mind races without boundaries—imagining, exploring and creating another world.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The freebie culture is a threat to democracy

I refer to your editorial 'Election spending: Mind the gap' (Mar 4). Ensuring a level playing field for all contestants is a democratic requirement and ethical mandate. The Supreme Court has rightly taken exception to pre-election freebies, but the Election Commission's silence is concerning. Freebies are bribes to voters, masquerading as manifesto promises, and undermine our democracy. All parties seem keen to outdo each other in offering handouts, disregarding the long-term consequences. It is a mockery of elections in a democracy such as ours, where all ruling parties in states are vying with one another to increase the quantum of freebies not as practical, effective welfare measures but to win elections.
T V Pandarinath Naidu, Kudige

Courting disaster

I refer to 'High risk to human life: Leaders flag 'illegal' nod to Char Dham road works' (Mar 4). Despite two veteran leaders, Murli Manohar Joshi and Karan Singh, writing to three top cabinet ministers seeking cancellation of approval for two key segments of the Char Dham project, forest clearance has been granted for felling 7,000 trees in the ecologically fragile Jhala Jangla stretch of the Netala bypass. This is unfortunate, as it is illegal and contrary to the Supreme Court's conditional approval, which was subject to the High Powered Committee's recommendation. The government's decision appears to be endangering human life in a fragile Himalayan environment, where no precaution can withstand nature's fury.
H R Bapu Satyanarayana, Mysuru

Prudence over polemics

Apropos 'Strategic silence is a policy drift' (Mar 4), the response of the Narendra Modi government to the death of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has been restrained, pragmatic and mature. Despite pressure from certain quarters to issue sweeping condemnations, New Delhi refused to be dragged into ideological posturing and reflexive hostility towards the US. For India, foreign policy must remain anchored in national interest, economic pragmatism and regional stability.
N Sadhasiva Reddy, Bengaluru

Our readers are welcome to email letters to: **letters@deccanherald.co.in** (only letters emailed – not handwritten – will be accepted). All letters must carry the sender's postal address and phone number.

SPEAK OUT

What Waterloo was to Napoleon, Tamil Nadu will be to BJP... I will be the representative and raise the voice of DMK whenever and wherever necessary...

Tiruchi Siva, DMK MP

I am certain there is too much certainty in the world.

Michael Crichton

TO BE PRECISE

IN PERSPECTIVE

Indian labour in wartime Israel

The expanding labour ties between the two countries must be backed with stronger protections for the Indian workers

DIVYA MALHOTRA

The United States-Israel joint offensive against Iran and Tehran's retaliation across West Asia is a full-blown war that also threatens 16,000 Indian construction workers resident in Israel. Following recent agreements during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Israel, New Delhi has committed to expanding this agreement by facilitating the arrival of up to 50,000 workers over the next five years. This transforms what began as a wartime adjustment into a long-term labour partnership.

In the aftermath of the October 2023 Hamas attack on Israel, Tel Aviv's crisis was not confined to the warfront. It seeped into daily life. Construction sites froze. Agricultural cycles were disrupted. A labour model built on cross-border Palestinians collapsed almost overnight as permits were suspended and security restrictions tightened. The country faced severe labour shortages, especially in informal sectors like construction, which traditionally relied on Palestinian workers.

Over the following months, a fragile economic recalibration began. Foreign recruitment pipelines were activated to replace Palestinians. Projects slowly restarted, not because the war had ended, but because Israel adapted. Labour diversification became part of economic resilience. Into this recalibrated labour ecosystem stepped an unexpected but increasingly central partner: India.

In November 2023, the Government of India and Israel formalised this arrangement through a bilateral MoU establishing regulated recruitment channels. Structured as a pilot from 2023 to 2026, it institutionalised what began as a crisis response. But the scale is now expanding dramatically.

Interestingly, some of the Indian construction workers already in Israel have taken to social media to document monthly earnings of approximately Rs 1.4 lakh and a sense of dignity in manual labour that often eludes informal work back home. Even as sirens interrupt daily routines, many speak of stability and upward mobility. Despite the risks of a war zone, the willingness to work in Israel remains strong. But as confrontation with Iran intensifies, the implications of the renewed MoU are significant.

Since New Delhi and Tel Aviv normalised ties in 1992, Indians have been part of Israel's labour market, especially in caregiving and specialised sectors such as the diamond industry and Information Technology. But the entry of Indian blue-collar workers into construction at scale marked a structural shift. Israel moved from reliance on cheaper, geographically proximate, but politically volatile labour towards distant, state-regulated, costlier but politically safer workforces.

Safety at work

Construction is not merely another sector. Housing shortages, stalled infrastructure, and rising costs shape public confidence and political stability. Restarting projects was a signal of resilience. Sustaining them under renewed Israel-Iran hostilities is now a test of governance.

Yet the human dimension cannot be ignored. Indian workers operate in a conflict-adjacent environment. Many live in shared accommodations. Language barriers limit situational awareness during emergencies. Mobility can be restricted during alerts.

Recent incidents, including attacks on Indian workers in Ashkelon and the March 2025 rescue of Indian nationals abducted and held in the West Bank village of al-Zaayem, underscore that labour mobility into wartime Israel is not merely an economic transaction. It is a matter of human security and political accountability.

As hostilities with Iran escalate, these vulnerabilities sharpen. For Israeli society, this expansion of foreign labour raises a long-term question: what kind of migrant labour model does Israel want?

Historically, foreign workers have been treated as temporary and socially peripheral. But dependence often outlasts intention. As Indian workers become embedded in construction and caregiving sectors — especially at a projected scale of 50,000 over five years — the challenge will no longer be limited to temporary workforce management but reconciling long-term economic reliance with meaningful inclusion and protection.

There is also a geopolitical dimension. India continues to uphold formal support for a two-state solution in international diplomacy. But at a time of open confrontation, India's decision to deepen labour engagement indicates that its strategic partnership with Israel carries real weight, even when regional optics are complex. Under such circumstances, labour mobility also becomes a quiet diplomatic signal.

By sustaining and promoting labour commitments amid open confrontation, both Delhi and Tel Aviv are signalling that their relationship is no longer crisis-driven but structurally embedded.

This new phase of Indo-Israel labour cooperation is not just another MoU; it is strategic convergence.

But diplomatic signalling cannot substitute for governance. If Israel and India are to scale this corridor amid open regional confrontation, labour protections must rise to match strategic ambition. That means enforceable contracts, transparent recruitment oversight, proactive consular coordination, clear emergency protocols, and credible evacuation planning.

(The writer is with the Centre for National Security Studies, MS Ramaiah University, and has a PhD on Israel's foreign policy from Jawaharlal Nehru University)

From cadre to camera: The growing power of PR in Kerala politics

DATELINE Thiruvananthapuram

ARJUN RAGHUNATH

With his 'scoundrel' remark against a political opponent, the kadakku purathu (get out) retort to journalists, and visible irritation over a malfunctioning microphone at a public event, Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has often carried the image of a rigid and 'stubborn' politician.

But in a recent hour-long interview with ace actor Mohanlal, viewers saw a markedly different Pinarayi. The chief minister spoke of growing up reading the Ramayana and Mahabharata, which, he claims, helped inculcate a certain ascetic discipline in him, and of his emotional bond with his mother. The interview carefully steered clear of politics.

Coming as it does when the two-time CM is seeking a third consecutive term, the interview can hardly be viewed as casual; it appeared to be a carefully calibrated public relations exercise (PR) aimed at projecting the humane side of Pinarayi—as he is popularly known—and thereby softening a hardened personal image.

PR is not new to Kerala politics. What has changed is that the exercise is getting more organised and polished. Personal narratives and appearances of leaders are increasingly being brought to the foreground, sidelining ideological debates and policy questions.

The Pinarayi-Mohanlal conversation is not a one-off. In 2019, actor Akshay Kumar conducted a non-political, freewheeling interview with Prime Minister Narendra Modi ahead of the general election. In Kerala too, Mohanlal had earlier interviewed Congress leader and former Chief Minister Oommen Chandy in 2008 when he was the leader of the opposition. Veteran CPM leader and former Chief Minister V S Achuthanandan, too, had appeared in a widely watched conversation with actor-director Sreenivasan.

However, the timing of the Pinarayi-Mohanlal interview is significant. It has come at a time when Kerala's political climate is thick with allegations and counter-allegations about politicians and political parties engaging expensive PR agencies—not just for boosting personal images but even for political interventions and building narratives.

The Congress' election strategist Sunil Kanugolu has been frequently targeted by the CPM as the 'outsourced' PR strategist of the Congress. Pinarayi himself had earlier ridiculed Kanugolu's reported interventions in Congress's electioneering in the state.

Two years ago, the alleged involvement of a PR agency in inserting controversial, communally toned content into an interview given by Pinarayi Vijayan to an English daily had triggered a political storm in Kerala. The episode signals how message management has become a battleground.

Subtle rebranding is visible elsewhere too—hairstyle makeovers of senior leaders; carefully curated, and frequently posted, video reels of politicians showing off their fitness; and a steady stream of "day in the life" reels flooding social media. As elections approach, such efforts gain more steam. The mushrooming of online channels over the past few years has further expanded the ecosystem in which political PR operates.

"Earlier, politicians liaised with journalists in mainstream media to ensure favourable coverage and frequent publication of their pictures. Now social media has become the key communication platform. Hence, politicians are exploring it aggressively, and PR agencies are cashing in on it," says a veteran journalist and politician who did not wish to be named.

Political scientists, however, are still sceptical about the impact of the pre-poll PR and social media campaigns.

"Studies and surveys by some agencies have shown that 80% of voters decide their preferences much ahead of the polls and only less than 20% decide their preferences just ahead of the polling day. Keralites being more literate and politically aware won't get easily influenced by pre-poll PR exercises," says J Prabhash, a former pro-vice-chancellor and head of the department of political science at the University of Kerala.

Senior journalist and political observer Jacob George also observes that even as PR for image boosting has become an integral part of present-day political campaigns, its influence on the voters could be only around 10 to 20%. But he adds a caveat: in tightly fought elections, even a marginal influence matters. "Visibility is an important factor in politics. Voters also look for good qualities in their leaders. Hence, no surprise that the aspiring politicians are engaging PR agencies in this competitive world," says George.

Prabhash traces the rise of political PR in India to the post-1991 liberalisation era. "In developed countries, PR agencies have long been involved in politics. Later on, they came into play in northern states and are now active in Kerala," he notes.

His concern is whether genuine political issues are being sidelined. "Earlier politicians and political parties used to influence voters through public speeches and street plays on key issues concerning the people and the state. Those are now being replaced with PR campaigns where the focus is more on personal image building," he says.

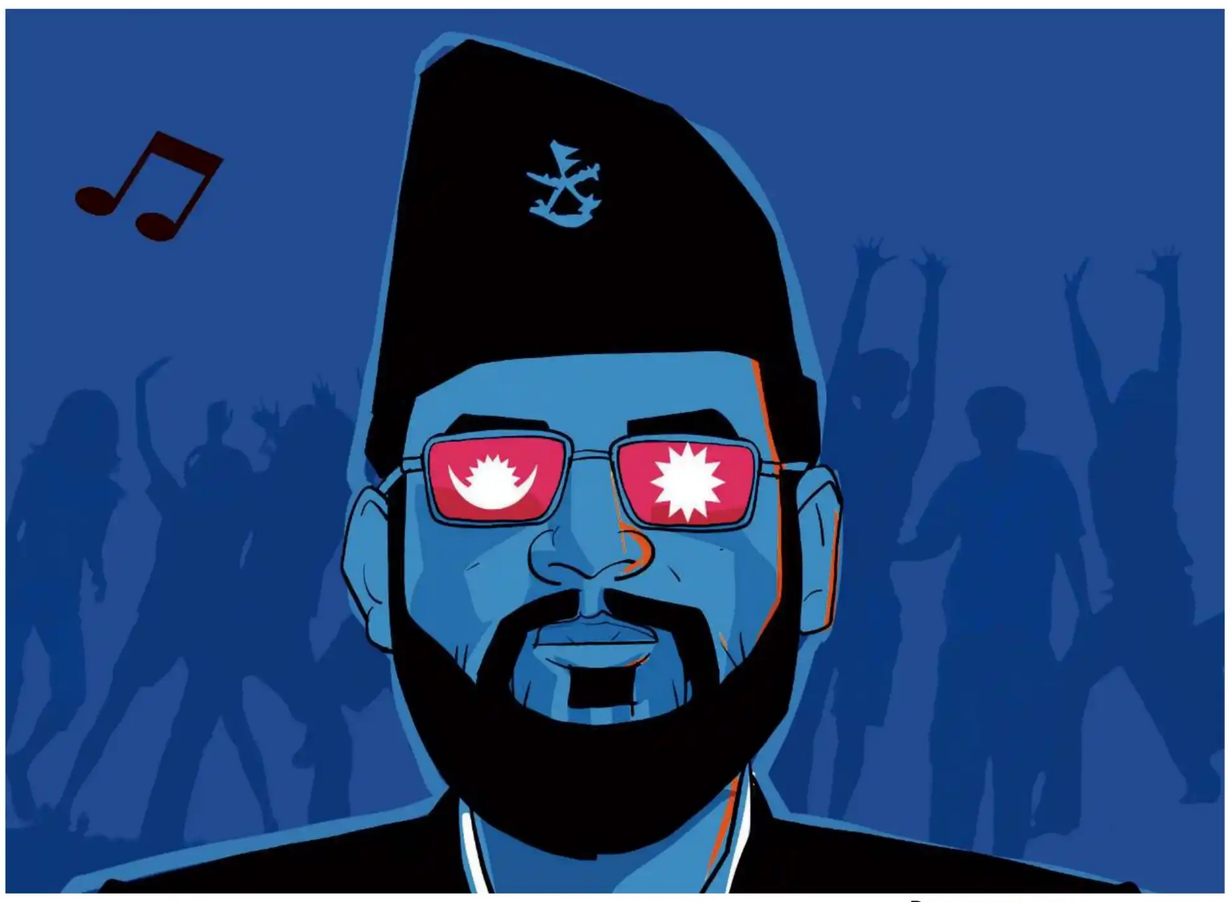
For communist parties, the embrace of professional PR sits uneasily with ideological moorings. But, as one veteran party worker who earlier handled promotional activities for Communist leaders puts it, the justification is simple: 'change with the time.'

He recalls the controversy in 2012 when the then CPI state secretary, C K Chandrappan, criticised the CPM for allegedly hiring an event management firm for its state conference. Pinarayi, then CPM state secretary, had sharply rebutted the charge.

PR campaigns are not necessarily about cosmetic makeovers. Leaders like Oommen Chandy and Achuthanandan, built powerful public images. Chandy's shabby hairstyle, wrinkled shirts and worn sandals, and more importantly, his constant presence amid crowds, became his political persona. Achuthanandan's no-nonsense stance and oratory skills formed his brand. **DHNS**

Nepal is holding its first election since a youth-led uprising against corruption toppled the government last year. Here is what to know

HANNAH BEECH AND BINOD GHIMIRE



DH ILLUSTRATION: DEEPAK HARICHANDAN

Gen Z voters in Nepal pin their hopes on a millennial rapper

Nepalis will vote for a new government Thursday, the first election since a Gen Z revolution in September turned the Himalayan nation into a surprise symbol of youthful power. Voter expectations feel as lofty as the mountains that dominate the landscape, even if previous elections have delivered a revolving door of coalition governments.

This time around, a onetime rapper has electrified the electorate, with hopes that he can vanquish establishment rivals, such as the prime minister ousted by the Generation Z movement.

For years, the country has been so stymied by corruption and political patronage that each year hundreds of thousands of Nepalis feel they have no choice but to go overseas for work. Many people want fairer opportunities at home and accountability for the deadly crackdown on the Gen Z protests, which was followed by a mass arson campaign that destroyed thousands of buildings nationwide.

"This election will decide whether my 4-year-old son will live in Nepal or migrate to another country," said Biki Shrestha, a finance manager at an IT company. "We need change."

Who is the Gen Z candidate?

Ask young Nepalis who excites them and the answer is likely to be one word: Balen.

At 35, Balendra Shah, the former mayor of Kathmandu, the capital, is not quite Gen Z. But the millennial rapper, who tamed the city's trash crisis, is considered the change candidate.

Shah — who rarely appears in public without black sunglasses, a black suit and a corps of social media chroniclers who try to offset his volatile posts blasting his political rivals and foreign powers — has pitched himself as the next prime minister of Nepal. He is running in the same eastern Nepal constituency as K P Sharma Oli, the prime minister ousted by the Gen Z movement after the deaths of 19 protesters.

"For many years, we have seen the same political parties, and they have not changed anything in Nepal," said Sujan Sipai, a teacher from the ancient city of Bhaktapur. "That's why, this time, the entire country has stood up against corruption and for Balen." Before the election, Nepalis celebrated Holi. Politics weren't supposed to colour the celebration. But the crowds in Kathmandu anointed each other with vibrant powders and shouted a single name: Balen.

Who else is running?

Although Shah ran for mayor as an independent, in this election he has lent his star power to the Rastriya Swatantra Party, a young political force that markets itself as clean, technocratic and digitally fluent. The RSP is fielding nine Gen Z candidates, several of whom were aides to Shah.

That's an implicit contrast to the other big political parties—two communist parties, and the centre-left Nepali Congress. The three have only a few Gen Z candidates among them, although they have powerful machineries and long-standing supporters. Until recently, they were all led by septuagenarians who had served as prime minister. This year, the Nepali Congress almost broke apart when Gagan Kumar Thapa, 49, ousted the party president, who was three decades his senior.

"It was due to that Gen Z movement that our party felt that the time has come," Thapa said.

Sixty-five political parties are contesting the elections, and nearly 160 Gen Z candidates are running, roughly half as independents. Despite the prominent role women played in last year's protests, there are only 15 Gen Z female candidates.

How does Nepal vote?

Each party or independent candidate is represented on the ballot by a symbol for ease of recognition. The RSP uses a bell, the Marxist-Leninist communists a sun. Others include a kangaroo (not native to Nepal), a chicken, a stapler, a shuttlecock, a cable car and a pair of pliers.

Nepal is a diverse country that includes tropical jungles and the tallest mountains in the world. On voting day, the electorate will be getting its steps in. No one in Nepal will be able to drive a vehicle to the polling stations unless they have a special pass.

That's because of worries about security. After enduring a long Maoist insurgency, the massacre of its royal family, and the end of its constitutional monarchy in 2008, Nepal has embraced democracy. Voter turnout is typically high. But violence has also stalked the polls. About 335,000 security personnel have been mobilised for the vote, including nearly 150,000 special election police.

Nepal is also wedged between China and India, a geostrategic position that causes constant fears of foreign interference.

Although roughly 10% of Nepal's 30 million people live abroad and many more have moved elsewhere in the country, there is no absentee voting. Many Nepalis work in the Gulf, and the shutdown of regional airports following the Iran war has doomed their chance of voting in person.

Of the 275 seats up for grabs, 165 seats will be directly elected and the remainder divvied up through proportional representation. Full electoral results won't be tallied for days.

Whichever party wins the most votes Thursday is unlikely to secure a meaningful majority. That would mean a coalition government, a recipe for horse trading rather than corruption-busting and political transparency.

Can Gen Z change Nepal?

Nepal's Gen Z revolution occurred at warp speed. On Sept. 8, young Nepalis took to the streets of Kathmandu to protest corruption, nepotism and a government social media ban. Security forces responded with lethal force. A day later, chaos exploded across the country. Coordinated arson attacks burned many symbols of state, including parliament and government ministries. Dozens more died. Oli resigned, but it was too late. A government was all but toppled in two days.

Since then, the pace of change has slowed. Despite a caretaker government formed with the blessing of Gen Z leaders, no one has been convicted in connection with the violence last September. Two commissions charged with investigating the deadly crackdown and the ensuing unrest have not released their reports, despite expectations that would happen before the elections.

Last month, Nepal's former king, Gyanendra Shah, called for the elections to be postponed. Some Nepalis look back nostalgically on an era when the monarchy, in their view, served as a unifying force. But voting is set to go ahead. Campaigning for the RSP reached the sweaty, shrieking fervour more often seen at pop concerts, with teens and bearded men alike screaming their adulation for Shah. Fleets of motorcycles cruised the streets flying flags with the RSP's blue bell.

For a generation that forced open the doors of power with stunning speed, Thursday's vote is the next measure of its resolve. The ballots cast across jungles, hill towns and Himalayan valleys will determine not only who governs, but whether the promise of that brief, combustible revolution can be translated into a steadier democratic future. **NYT**

The politics of freebies

PRASHANT KUMAR CHOUDHARY AND MEHUL KUMAR

The normative foundations of social justice hold that the poor are entitled to subsidised access to food, sanitation, housing, education, and health care. This claim derives its constitutional legitimacy from Article 38 of the Directive Principles of State Policy (DPSP), which directs the State to promote a social order informed by social, economic, and political justice. Together, these principles articulate a clear constitutional commitment to redistribution and the protection of the poor and marginalised sections of society. Morally and legally, this position is difficult to contest.

Economic reasoning, however, operates under different constraints. Ethical aspiration and empirical feasibility do not always converge. The central policy question is one of sustainability: how are such commitments to be financed over the long term? The desirability of publicly funded welfare programmes and their fiscal viability are analytically bipolar, particularly from a political economy perspective.

In electoral politics, incentives often diverge from fiscal prudence. Political actors are oriented towards winning elections, and redistributive schemes can yield immediate electoral dividends irrespective of long-term sustainability. While such programmes may alleviate poverty directly, they can impose substantial fiscal costs over time. During the most recent Bihar Assembly election, for instance, the incumbent National Democratic Alliance (NDA) government transferred Rs 10,000 to 25 lakh women under the Chief Minister Women Employment Scheme, entailing an outlay of Rs 2,500 crore. Measures of this kind may generate short-term political gains, but they also raise critical questions about fiscal durability and opportunity costs.

The IPSOS Populism Report (2025) provides insights into individuals' opinions on government spending in India. It reveals a pronounced preference for expansionary public spending, a hallmark of redistributive populist sentiment. Strong majorities endorse increased allocations for job creation (73%), education (72%), public safety (72%), defence and national security (72%), health care (71%), and infrastructure (70%). Yet only 44% favour raising taxes to finance additional spending. This pattern reflects the populist orientation that prioritises visible welfare and developmental commitments at the cost of raising taxes.

The Union Budget 2026–27 characterises its subsidy policy as calibrated and fiscally prudent rather than open-ended. Combined allocations for food, fertiliser and petroleum subsidies exceed Rs 4.11 lakh crore, with food subsidies accounting for the largest share at Rs 2.28 lakh crore. The fertiliser subsidy, estimated at Rs 1,70,781 crore, signals a degree of normalisation after the volatility triggered by global commodity price shocks.

The fiscal deficit is projected at 4.3% of GDP, indicating a continued consolidation trajectory. Notably, interest payments—crossing Rs 14 lakh crore—far outstrip total subsidy expenditure, underscoring structural pressures on public finances. At the same time, capital expenditure remains a strategic priority to sustain growth momentum. According to the "Rupee Goes To" classification, subsidies constitute roughly 8% of total expenditure—substantially lower than their political salience might suggest.

When properly targeted at marginalised sections—particularly the poorest—the schemes can be normatively justified in the name of social justice and distributive equity. In practice, however, the beneficiary pool often extends to middle-class and economically better-off groups. Welfare schemes then function less as instruments of social justice and more as mechanisms for electoral mobilisation and political consolidation. The result is merely diluted targeting but growing concerns about fiscal prudence and long-term sustainability. The Supreme Court recently observed, 'It is understandable that some people cannot afford it; the State has to provide...But for people who do not deserve it, those who are affluent, why give them freebies?' Is it not high time for the States to revisit these policies?"

The core issue, therefore, is the durability of electorally driven populism in the absence of structural strategies for poverty reduction. Direct cash transfers and other immediate benefits may yield political dividends, but they cannot substitute indirect, growth-oriented measures such as sustained employment generation, investment in skill formation and upgradation, and expanded access to quality education. Recent electoral outcomes in Bihar suggest that populist appeals can be politically effective; their long-term viability remains uncertain. Judicial observations have echoed this concern. The broader policy challenge lies in reconciling short-term political incentives with long-term welfare provisions—particularly in health and education.

(Prashant is an assistant professor, Department of Public Policy, Manipal Academy of Higher Education, and Mehul is a research scholar, Institute for Social and Economic Change, Bengaluru)

OUR PAGES OF HISTORY

50 YEARS AGO: MARCH 1976

States told to stop needless use of force by police

New Delhi, March 4
Home Minister Brahmananda Reddy has asked chief ministers to issue specific instructions to ensure that the police do not resort to needless violence in the performance of their duties. Superintendents of Police and other supervisory officers, he has suggested, should be told that it is their personal responsibility to see that the police force under them behaves in a humane manner in dealing with the public. Mrs. Gandhi herself is said to have told the Home Minister that in her tours she had witnessed unnecessary use of force by the police.

25 YEARS AGO: MARCH 2001

Destruction of Buddha statues a shameless act: PM

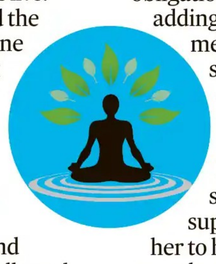
New Delhi, Mar 4
Condemning the continued demolition of the Bamiyan Buddhas, Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee today described it as a "shameless act" and dubbed the Taliban regime in Afghanistan as "uncivilised." Pointing out that the Taliban demolishing the Buddha statues in spite of protests from across the world, he said the Taliban rulers were not true Muslims as they had no respect for human sentiments and were governed by extreme hatred. Mr Vajpayee has written to world leaders, urging them to help stop the destruction of the statues.

OASIS | DOROTHY VICTOR

In charity, we glorify God

During a recent crowdfunding effort to support a marginalised lady battling a life-threatening disorder, I witnessed a beautiful truth: in charity we glorify God. When we unite in charity, offering our skills and resources to uplift the vulnerable, we do more than meet a need — we honour God and reveal His glory through acts of mercy.

At the outset, while considering how to begin, a well-wisher of the lady who learned of my predicament volunteered to help. He put me on to a contact who guided me on setting up the platform. From doctor's certificates to medical reports, I collected the required credentials. Soon, with the help of my children, we uploaded the documents and the page was live.



The next step was to send the appeal out into the vast online world. I first shared the link with my immediate and extended family. Most of them were quick to respond and extend their support.

I then reached out to my wider circle of friends and WhatsApp groups. What followed was equally moving. Though a few graciously declined for valid reasons and some chose to ignore the message, many responded swiftly, motivated by compassion rather than obligation. They contributed quietly, adding messages of encouragement and solidarity. A few even shared the link within their own networks. A number of the lady's contacts also contributed directly to her. Her extended family also stood by her with unwavering support. They accompanied her to hospital visits and medical consultations, and lovingly cared for her two young sons whenever she was unable to do so.

This experience led me to reflect: why is it that, when everyone could have turned away in indifference, so many chose to help someone they have never met — and likely never will? I realised that it was the spirit of God at work. I understood that compassion does not originate from us alone. God, in His goodness and mercy, plants it within our hearts. His spirit stirs us to act, and blesses the work of our hands. In every generous response and quiet sacrifice, His grace is at work.

To everyone who supported this lady, I raise a heart-felt toast. In glorifying God through your charity, you will reap the rewards that God promises to the generous and kind-hearted.

Sharad Pawar set to be MVA candidate for Rajya Sabha seat

MUMBAI, DHNS: After a series of negotiations and tough calls, the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in the Opposition in Maharashtra seems to have reached a consensus and decided to field veteran politician Sharad Pawar for the biennial elections to the Rajya Sabha from Maharashtra

The BJP, which leads the ruling Maha Yuti, also announced its list of candidates, springing surprises by not repeating candidates.

It announced the names of BJP general secretary Vinod Tawde, a Maratha face; eminent tribal leader Maya Chintaman Ivnate, a former member of the National Commission of Scheduled Tribes and former Nagpur Mayor; and Ramrao Wadkute, a former MLC, who hails from the Dhangar community.

The BJP is also expected to back prominent Dalit leader and Union Minister of State for Social Justice and Empowerment Ramdas Athawale, president of the Republic Party of India (Athawale), giving him another term.

It may be mentioned that the NCP has already announced the candidature of Parth Pawar, the son of Deputy Chief Minister Sunetra Pawar and the late Ajit Pawar.

The Shiv Sena, led by Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde, is yet to announce a candidate's name, as two to three people are seeking a Rajya Sabha berth.

104-yr-old man listed 'under adjudication' in Bengal final rolls

KOLKATA, PTI: A 104-year-old man has complained of being listed in the "under adjudication" category in the final electoral rolls issued by the Election Commission following the SIR exercise in West Bengal on February 28, officials said on Wednesday.

Sheikh Ibrahim, a resident of Jamalpur gram panchayat, said he has voted in every election since India's first general polls after Independence and had never faced such an experience.

"Is it a crime to live beyond 100 years? I have always believed in casting votes... Why can't I vote this time? This is my country," he said.

His 70-year-old son said that after his father was called for a hearing at camps "due to some logical discrepancies as claimed by the EC," EC officials later visited their residence, and all necessary documents were submitted.

"The EC official who conducted the hearing expressed satisfaction and assured his name will be in the rolls. However, after the final rolls were published, we found his name listed 'under adjudication category.' We fail to comprehend why," his son said.

After a roller-coaster ride, DMK & Cong finalise poll pact

The grand old party gets 28 Assembly seats and 1 RS berth

DMK president M K Stalin and Tamil Nadu Congress Committee chief K Selva Perunthagai after signing the seat-sharing agreement. DH PHOTO

E T B SIVAPRIYAN
CHENNAI, DHNS

After weeks of negotiations and several rounds of back-channel talks, Tamil Nadu's ruling DMK on Wednesday allotted 28 Assembly seats and a Rajya Sabha berth to the Congress as part of the deal for the April-May elections.

DMK President M K Stalin and Tamil Nadu Congress Committee chief K Selva Perunthagai signed the agreement in the presence of AICC in-charge Girish Chodankar. Chodankar was excluded from the final round of negotiations after the DMK objected to his public comments on the alliance. "We are happy that the deal has been signed. Both DMK and Congress have made the right decision at the right time," Selva Perunthagai told reporters.

Sources said Congress is mulling whether to nominate AICC in charge for Telangana, Meenakashi Natarajan, whose roots are in Tamil Nadu, for the RS seat or give the lone berth to AICC secretary Christopher Tilak, who hails from the state.

Chodankar's Sunday statement that actor Vijay's TVK has recognised Congress' strength added more fuel to the fire.

The DMK was suspicious that the Congress was trying to use the TVK as its bargaining chip with a few leaders openly praising the actor's politics and the signing of the deal puts an end to all speculation about the cohesiveness of the Secular Progressive Alliance, which has won every election it contested since 2019.

As the talks did not move beyond a point, Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and Sonia Gandhi stepped into save the 22-year-old alliance by deputing senior leader P Chidambaram as their interlocutor.

Chidambaram met Stalin on Tuesday and held several rounds of back-channel talks to clinch the deal – while the Congress demanded 41 seats, the DMK was not willing to offer beyond 25 seats, the 2021 figure. Besides Chidambaram, DMK's Kanimozhi and Congress' Karti P Chidambaram also played a key role by holding back-channel talks to bring the alliance back on track.

During the meeting with Chidambaram, Stalin offered 27 seats, which increased by one on Wednesday when Kharge spoke to the DMK chief over the phone. Kharge and Gandhi insisted, sources told *DH*, that mere numbers should not decide the future course of the alliance and asked Chidambaram to conclude the deal.

Rahul Gandhi, though he gave his nod to Kharge, is not entirely happy with the deal since the DMK did not heed Congress' request of restoring the 2016 figure of 41 assembly seats. During the negotiations, Congress also dropped its demand for a share in power.

"The Congress which originally demanded 41 seats came down to 34 seats. But Kharge's argument was that there was not much difference between 28 seats and 34 seats. DMK's support in Parliament weighed heavily on his mind," a source told *DH*.

Cong finalises Kerala candidates, but waits to announce list

SHEMIN JOY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Congress has almost finalised candidates for around 60 of the 85-90 Assembly seats it will be contesting in Kerala, with all but two sitting MLAs and contestants who lost in narrow margins five years ago finding a place in the yet-to-be-announced list.

Sources said the leadership was awaiting the announcement of the election schedule, which may come any time after March 10, with 20 sitting MLAs and 40 others starting preparatory campaign work.

With little clarity on the schedule, sources said the candidates had not started voter outreach initiatives in a big way, because financial constraints would make sustaining a long campaign difficult.

Also, the leaders do not want candidates to face internal rebellion owing to the prior announcement of the list.

A senior leader said an early start to the campaign could also lead to "fatigue". However, potential candidates have begun meeting prominent community members and other influencers in their respective constituencies, as well as holding small meetings with family groups.

Unlike in previous instances, state-level Congress leaders decided to reach a consensus in Kerala itself before touching base with the Central leadership on their preliminary list. This has led to aspirants not camping in Delhi to lobby for a poll ticket.

Overall, 20 of the 22 MLAs who won on a Congress ticket last time will fight once again. Tripunithura MLA K Babu has announced retirement from electoral politics, and Palakkad MLA Rahul Mamkootathil has been expelled from the party following sexual-assault charges.

Leader of the Opposition V D Satheesan will contest again from North Paravoor, while former home minister Ramesh Chennithala, both are chief-ministerial aspirants, will fight from Haripad.

Kerala Congress president Sunny Joseph will recontest from Peravoor, where he is likely to face the CPM's popular face K K Shailaja, who will be shifting from Mattannur.

Though some MPs evinced interest in fighting the Assembly polls, the leadership was averse to the idea, as it would lead to bypolls, and the party does not want to play with its Lok Sabha numbers at this point.

The Congress contested 93 seats in the 2021 elections, leaving 47 to its allies, including the Muslim League.

WHY THE DELAY?

- Cong has finalised names for 60 of the 85-90 Assembly seats it wants to contest, but has not announced them for various reasons
- For one, finalised candidates would need to start campaigning right away, but financial constraints would make a long campaign difficult
- A senior leader said an early start to campaign could also lead to 'fatigue'

MEA sets up control room amid West Asia conflict

Issues helpline numbers to assist stranded Indians

NEW DELHI, PTI

The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) has set up a control room to assist those affected by the escalating crisis in West Asia.

The MEA has said almost one crore Indian citizens live in West Asia and their safety and well-being is of "utmost priority" for New Delhi.

As the Iran-US conflict widened, the Indian embassy in Iran moved hundreds of Indian students from the Iranian capital of Tehran to safer locations.

"A Control Room has been set up in the Ministry of External Affairs in view of the current situation in West Asia and the Gulf region," the MEA said on Wednesday.

"The Control Room can be contacted from 9 am to 9 pm at: 1800118797 (Toll Free) +91 11 2301 2113, +91 11 2301 4104, +91 11 2301 7905," it added.

The US launched military strikes on Iran on February 28, killing Iranian Supreme leader Ali Khamenei.

Following the military offensive, Iran has carried out a wave of attacks mainly targeting Israel and American military bases in several Gulf countries, including the UAE, Bahrain, Kuwait, Jordan and Saudi Arabia.

The MEA on Tuesday noted that almost one crore Indian citizens live and work in the Gulf region, and their "safety and well-being is of utmost priority."

The MEA said New Delhi is in touch with the governments in the region as well as other key partners.

AT A GLANCE

- Around 180 flights from three metro airports, Mumbai, Delhi and Bengaluru, were cancelled on Wednesday owing to airspace restrictions.
- A man from Rajasthan has gone missing after a missile struck an oil tanker he was aboard near Oman. Dalip Singh was in the forward section of the ship with another crew member, Ashish Kumar. While Kumar's body has been recovered, Dalip remains untraceable.

ADMIRAL ARUN PRAKASH (RETD)

"Sinking of Iranian warship, off southern tip of Sri Lanka, with heavy loss of life is a senseless & inflammatory act. Initiating another dimension of violence in this open-ended conflict, will spread alarm across the high seas & disrupt global seaborne commerce. Condemnable!

Kashmir under fresh curbs after pro-Iran protests

SRINAGAR, DHNS

For the first time since the 2019 abrogation of Article 370, excluding the COVID-19 lockdowns of 2020 and 2021, Kashmir remained under widespread law-and-order restrictions on Wednesday. Schools were shut and markets largely deserted.

Authorities imposed restrictions on Monday morning after protests erupted in parts of Srinagar and other districts over the reported killing of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in US-Israeli military action.

Demonstrators in old city areas attempted to take out rallies and raise slogans. Authorities moved to prevent escalation.

Security personnel were deployed at key junctions. Concertina wire was placed in parts of the old city and other sensitive areas.

All educational institutions—schools, colleges and universities—remained closed across the Valley for a third straight day. Officials described the move as precautionary.

Major commercial centres, including Lal Chowk, Nowhatta and Maisuma in Srinagar, were largely deserted. Shops were shut and public transport was minimal. Similar scenes were reported in district headquarters towns.

Mobile internet services were functioning, but at reduced speeds in many areas, residents said, affecting access to social media platforms.

Police registered FIRs against Aga Ruhullah, member of Parliament from Srinagar, and former Srinagar mayor Junaid Azim Mattu, among others.

Authorities alleged they uploaded social media content linked to the protests. Police sources said the cases relate to posts that could "disturb public order."

Officials said the restrictions were preventive and that the situation was under daily review. Normal life across the Valley remained significantly disrupted.

People raise slogans during a protest against the killing of Iran's late Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, while defying curfew-like restrictions on third consecutive day as precautionary measures amid the ongoing Israel-Iran conflict, at Magam, in Budgam district. PTI

Safety mechanisms in place for seafarers: Sonowal

NEW DELHI, DHNS: Union Shipping Minister Sarbananda Sonowal has said that all necessary mechanisms have been activated to ensure the safety and welfare of seafarers and maritime assets following conflict in West Asia.

"The government is closely monitoring the evolving situation in West Asia," he said on Wednesday. The Minister on Tuesday chaired a review meeting to assess the prevailing security environment in the Persian Gulf and examine its implications for Indian maritime assets and personnel.

"We are closely monitoring the evolving situation and have activated all necessary precautionary, monitoring and coordination mechanisms to ensure the safety and welfare of our seafarers and the security of our maritime assets. We remain in constant touch with relevant national and international agencies and are prepared to respond swiftly to any emerging development," Sonowal said.

He said his ministry is prepared to extend all necessary operational, diplomatic and humanitarian support to safeguard Indian vessels.

Meanwhile, the Indian National Shipowners' Association said that 37 Indian-flagged ships in the Hormuz Strait, with Indian seafarers on board, have sought assistance from the government for safe passage. The vessels stuck in the area have over 1,000 seafarers on board.

Akhilesh plans to woo Dalits with Kanshi Ram Jayanti

SANJAY PANDEY
LUCKNOW, DHNS

The next Assembly polls in Uttar Pradesh may still be a year away, but efforts by the major political players in the state to expand their support base by making a dent in the rival's vote bank have already started.

Akhilesh Yadav

Samajwadi Party (SP) president Akhilesh Yadav's attempt to bring the electorally influential Dalit community to his fold by invoking BSP founder Kanshi Ram as part of his Pichda, Dalit, Alpsankhyak (PDA) outreach has resulted in a fierce political face-off with BSP supremo Mayawati.

It all began with SP's decision to celebrate Kanshi Ram's birth anniversary on March 15 by holding meetings of the Dalit community at all district headquarters.

Akhilesh also directed his senior party leaders to attend the meetings and explain to the Dalit community the warm and friendly relations between Kanshi Ram and SP founder Mulayam Singh Yadav.

SP and BSP had formed a coalition government in UP in 1993 to prevent the BJP from assuming power in the state, which was led by Mulayam.

The coalition, however, did not last long, and the government collapsed in 1995 following the infamous 'guest house incident' when SP supporters allegedly attacked Mayawati, who was staying there, after BSP withdrew its support from the government.

However, Mayawati lashed out at Akhilesh, saying that it was the same Mulayam who had encouraged his supporters to storm the guest house after she announced withdrawal of support to him.

"The Dalits will never forget the guest house incident, and all attempts to attract them to his (Akhilesh) party will not succeed," Mayawati said.

"Dalits are not Mayawati's property...she has not done anything for them during her tenure as chief minister," said an SP leader here.

India backs Myanmar-led peace process: Jaishankar

NEW DELHI, PTI: India supports a Myanmar-led, Myanmar-owned peace process that can deliver lasting peace and development for all in the Southeast Asian country, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Wednesday.

S Jaishankar

The minister also highlighted the importance India attaches to its ties with Myanmar, saying the country lies at the confluence of New Delhi's three key foreign policy priorities: 'Neighbourhood First', 'Act East', and MAHASAGAR (Mutual and Holistic Advancement for Security and Growth Across Regions).

Myanmar is one of India's strategic neighbours and it shares a 1,640-kilometre-long border with several northeastern states.

The country has been witnessing widespread violent protests after the military seized power in a coup on February 1, 2021. The military-backed party secured a victory in Myanmar's recent general election.

Jaishankar was speaking virtually at the inauguration of the Sarsobeikman Literary Centre building in the heart of Yangon. The building has been constructed with New Delhi's assistance.

"As the world's largest democracy with 1.4 billon people living together in peace and harmony, India has regularly shared its experiences in federalism and constitutionalism with stakeholders in Myanmar," he said.

"We support an inclusive, Myanmar-led, and Myanmar-owned peace process that can deliver lasting peace and development for all in Myanmar," he added.

Jaishankar said the Sarsobeikman Centre will support the conservation and study of classical and folk literatures of Myanmar.

GEOPOLITICAL FALLOUT

Morbi's ceramic industry risks shutdown over gas shortage

MORBI, PTI

The ceramic industry in Gujarat's Morbi faces a potential shutdown in the next few days as gas supplies from the Gulf region remain disrupted due to the ongoing war-like situation involving Israel, the United States, and Iran, said industry representatives on Wednesday.

The industry relies heavily on propane or natural gas, particularly for firing kilns and drying processes.

President of the Morbi Ceramic Manufacturers Association (Vitrified Tiles Division), Manoj Arvadiya, said petroleum and gas shipments coming from the Gulf countries have been impacted, with consignments stuck at the Strait of Hormuz, which is under Iran's control.

"Gas is the main fuel for the Morbi ceramic industry. Due to the current situation at the Strait of Hormuz, the gas supply has stopped," he said. Companies using propane have a maximum stock of only three-four days, he said.

Regarding CNG supplied by Gujarat Gas Ltd, he said the estimated available stock will last about one week.

"If the war situation persists, then in the coming week or 10 days, we will face a situation where the entire ceramic industry will have to suspend operations. This is the possibility we foresee," he added.

Echoing similar concerns, Haresh Bopaliya, president of the Morbi Ceramic Manufacturers Association (Wall Tiles Division), said the supply chain for natural gas and propane has been disturbed, affecting the timely availability of fuel to units.

"The supply chain for natural gas and propane has been disrupted. Because of this, the supply that companies should be receiving is not happening," Bopaliya said.

He noted that propane stock with companies is likely to last only two-three days, while natural gas supply from Gujarat Gas is estimated to continue for around 10 days.

"After that, if we do not get propane or natural gas, we will face the situation of shutting down the industry," he said.

Bopaliya said Morbi has around 600 ceramic units, and all of them may have to shut down if the supply remains irregular.

Two to three lakh labourers working in Morbi's ceramic units will face difficulties in case of a shutdown, he said.

Ceramic manufacturer Manibhai Bavarva said most units in Morbi are dependent on propane and natural gas, with nearly 80% using propane.

Finnish Prez begins India visit; trade, tech in focus

NEW DELHI, PTI

Finnish President Alexander Stubb began a four-day visit to India on Wednesday to shore up bilateral cooperation across a wide spectrum of areas, including trade, investment and critical technology.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, welcoming Stubb, said his visit will take India-Finland relations to "new heights"

Stubb will hold talks with Prime Minister Modi on Thursday, following which the two sides are expected to firm up a number of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) to boost cooperation in a number of sectors.

The crisis in West Asia is likely to feature prominently in the meeting.

"The visit will further strengthen the relations between Finland and India, including in the area of trade," Stubb said on social media before leaving for New Delhi.

Finnish President Alexander Stubb being accorded a Guard of Honour at the Palam Air Force Station, in New Delhi. PTI

The Finnish president will be the chief guest at the inaugural session of the Raisina Dialogue on Thursday evening.

"Welcome to India, President Alexander Stubb. I fully agree with you, your visit will take India-Finland relations to new heights. I eagerly look forward to our meeting tomorrow and to your keynote address at the Raisina Dialogue 2026," Modi said on X in response to Stubb's remarks.

The Finnish president was accorded a warm welcome at the airport by Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh.

"India and Finland share a warm and friendly relationship rooted in shared democratic values. President Stubb's visit will impart further energy to India-Finland relations," external affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said on social media.

Stubb will also meet President Droupadi Murmu and Vice President C P Radhakrishnan. He will travel to Mumbai on Friday.

Kerala Guv signs Bill making Malayalam sole official language

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, PTI: Kerala Governor Rajendra Vishwanath Arlekar on Wednesday signed the Malayalam Language Bill 2025, which makes Malayalam the sole official language of administration in the state.

The Bill, which was passed by the Assembly in October last year, had faced opposition from the Karnataka government, which was concerned that it would force students from the linguistic minorities living in the border regions to compulsorily learn Malayalam.

Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan had tried to allay the concerns by pointing out that the Bill contains a clear and unambiguous non-obstante clause to safeguard the rights of linguistic minorities, particularly the Kannada and Tamil-speaking communities.

The Kerala CM said that students whose mother tongue is not Malayalam are free to choose languages available in schools in accordance with National Education Curriculum.

Kashmir: Record warmth threatens orchards, water resources & livelihoods

Day temperatures soar above normal, snow deficit deepens

ZULFIKAR MAJID
SRINAGAR, DHNS

WEATHER WORRIES

- Orchardists report fruit trees, normally dormant until March, have burst into bloom
- Winter precipitation deficit has led to streams and springs receding earlier than normal

Kashmir is in the grip of a deepening winter crisis as February 2026 has gone down as the warmest on record, with daytime temperatures soaring around 9-10°C above normal across the Valley, shattering decades-old climatic norms.

Instead of freezing winds and snow, Srinagar, Gulmarg, and other parts of the Valley endured persistent warmth, with many places recording daytime highs in excess of 20°C — temperatures more associated with early spring than mid-winter.

Meteorologists say the sustained warmth is not just an occasional spike but a pronounced departure from usual winter patterns. "What we witnessed was not just isolated warm days, but a consistent rise in daytime temperatures throughout the month," said Faizan Arif, an independent Srinagar-based weather forecaster, noting that this sustained heat pushed February's average maximum temperatures into record territory across the Valley.

Orchardists report that fruit trees are blooming early, raising concerns. PTI

The climate anomaly has already begun to disrupt Kashmir's agricultural calendar. Orchardists report that fruit trees, normally dormant until March, have burst into early bloom. For Kashmir's horticulture sector, which is the backbone of the rural economy, this is a serious concern.

"Early flowering makes trees highly vulnerable to late frost damage and could severely affect fruit set and yields—this shift is a clear sign of warming stress on our orchards," said Ali Mohammad, a horticulture expert, urging authorities to prepare for potential crop losses if temperatures plunge suddenly in the coming weeks.

Snow, long Kashmir's natural reservoir, has been sparse across lower and mid-altitude areas. The winter precipitation deficit has led to early melting of existing snowpack, with streams and springs receding earlier than normal.

Agriculturalists worry that reduced snowmelt will compromise water availability for irrigation and drinking supplies in the critically dry months ahead.

Winter tourism, another vital pillar of Kashmir's economy, has also been hit hard. Ski slopes and winter trails around Gulmarg and Sonamarg have remained unusually bare, forcing cancellation of snow-based packages.

Hoteliers, guides and transport operators are reporting steep declines in bookings, leaving communities that depend on winter visitors facing economic stress.

Climate analysts attribute the anomaly to a combination of persistent high temperatures and a relative lack of strong Western Disturbances — the Mediterranean-fed systems that traditionally bring snowfall to the western Himalayas.

While some snowfall is forecast at higher elevations later this month, experts caution that isolated snow events cannot reverse what appears to be a systemic shift in seasonal climate patterns.

Rohit Pawar alleges cover-up in Baramati crash report

MRITYUNJAY BOSE
MUMBAI, DHNS

Alleging a major cover-up by the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) and the Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau (AAIB) in the Baramati plane crash involving the then Deputy Chief Minister Ajit Pawar, his nephew and NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar pointed out a series of alleged factual errors.

Rohit Pawar

The two-time legislator claimed that unknown individuals had conducted a "recce" of Baramati airport before the incident.

Ajit Pawar died in a Learjet crash along with four others while the plane was attempting to land at Baramati airport on January 28. The AAIB, which probed the incident, presented its interim report on February 28.

"Is this 'save-the-guilty' programme happening at the behest of a powerful individual? If so, the truth behind whether Ajit Dada's death was an accident or a conspiracy will never surface," he said.

Addressing his fifth press conference on the issue—three in Mumbai and two in New Delhi — Rohit questioned the seriousness of the investigators, pointing out that the official report erroneously refers to Baramati as a "district" and describes the Baramati Municipal Council as a "municipal corporation".

Attempting to establish a chain linking several individuals and companies, Rohit said VSRVPL owner V K Singh's name had surfaced in connection with other officials, politicians and financial entities in various deals.

Targeting the AAIB report, he said it was full of glaring errors. He alleged that it incorrectly claimed the falling aircraft hit trees when there were only small shrubs at the crash site, which were untouched, and failed to establish any relation between the crash site and the altitude from which the plane fell.

He further alleged that the 16-year-old aircraft engine had clocked 8,000 hours of flying, far above the stipulated 5,000 hours; questioned the attempt to land on Runway 11 instead of Runway 29; and asked why the probe team members were not named. He cited several other missing aspects in the report.

Resentment brews in Kerala CPM over snub to seniors

ARJUN RAGHUNATH
THIRUVANANTHAPURAM, DHNS

Amidst reports of former Kerala health minister and CPM leader K K Shailaja being denied her current seat, Mattanur in Kannur, CPM veteran and former minister G Sudhakaran has openly indicated his plans to quit the party close on the heels of reports that it rejected his request to contest again.

K K Shailaja

Resentment is also brewing in the party over state secretary M V Govindan's wife and local-level party leader P K Shyamala being considered for Taliparamaba in Kannur, where Govindan is the current MLA.

Sudhakarnan, a senior leader from Alappuzha and former public works minister, said in a social media post that party leaders were showing neglect towards him, and hence he had decided not to renew the party membership.

He also listed out instances of the neglect and insult he faced from party leaders, including a recent remark by the party state secretary.

"The Alappuzha district secretary was not giving me—a party member over the last 63 years — any involvement in party events in the district. Now, the party's state secretary himself made a remark at a press conference that implied that I was a person who didn't deserve any consideration. Hence, I do not want to pose an inconvenience to such leaders by remaining in the party," said the 79-year-old leader in the post.

Sudhakaran is likely to announce his future plans on Thursday.

Meanwhile, the CPM leadership was learnt to be going ahead with the decision to deny Shailaja her current seat, even after she reportedly expressed displeasure over it.

The party has reportedly asked her to contest from Peravoor, which is the current seat of Kerala Pradesh Congress Committee president Sunny Joseph.

Shailaja won from Peravoor in Kannur in 2006, but Joseph wrested the seat from her in 2011.

He won the next two elections, and is likely to contest again. Hence, it would not be a cakewalk for her.

CANINE CAPABILITIES

Manipur, TN dogs to boost Assam Rifles

SUMIR KARMAKAR
JORHAT (ASSAM), DHNS

Now, even defence forces are gradually trying to adopt the concept of Atmanirbhar Bharat (Self-Dependent India) in their canine power: Assam Rifles, the country's oldest paramilitary force, is preparing dog squads comprising Tangkhul Hui and Kombai, indigenous breeds from Manipur and Tamil Nadu, respectively, alongside imported breeds.

The Assam Rifles Dog Training Centre at Jorhat in eastern Assam has successfully completed a pilot project by training six Tangkhul Huis—a local breed the Tangkhul Naga tribes in Manipur's Ukhrul district use for hunting.

The centre is now gearing up to prepare canine squads comprising the Tangkhul Hui and the Kombai, named after Tamil Nadu's Kombai town, which Zamindars used for guarding.

Tangkhul Hui. (ASSAM RIFLES DOG TRAINING CENTRE, JORHAT)

"We started training six Tangkhul Hui dogs in 2022 as a pilot project. It was successfull, and so we have decided to induct more Tangkhul Hui. We will also induct Kombai dogs as per the Ministry of Home Affairs directive to gradually adopt the concept of Atmanirbhar Bharat even in expanding the range of canine power of our central forces," Lt Col Alok Palei, who heads the centre, told *DH*.

Favourable factors

Palei said Haofa or Tangkhul Hui were preferred not just for their stamina but also for disease resistance.

The centre has so far trained Labrador, German Shepherds, Belgian Malinois, and Tangkhul Huis. "Although Belgian Malinois are the best performers, our effort is to train our local breeds as well," Palei said.

Assam Rifles has the authorised strength of 344 dogs, but has 253 dogs, deployed in various units across the Northeast and four units in J&K.

POWER COMPANY OF KARNATAKA LIMITED
(Government of Karnataka undertaking) (CIN: U40101KA2007SGC043640)
4th Floor, INDHANA BHAVANA, Race Course Road
Bengaluru - 560009.

No. PCKL/Legal Cell/2025-26/124/7105 Date: 27.02.2026

NOTIFICATION

Notification for engagement of a Legal Officer on Contract Basis (01 number)

Power Company of Karnataka Limited (PCKL), a Government of Karnataka undertaking, issuing notification for engagement of a **Legal Officer on Contract basis.**

- **Qualification :** Any Degree with LLB.
- **Age limit:** The Maximum age shall not exceed 45 years.
- **Experience:** Min. 10 years of experience with an additional exposure in power sector.

How to Apply : Interested candidates may apply by downloading the application through our website **www.pckl.karnataka.gov.in from 05.03.2026 to 25.03.2026.** For detailed advertisement, eligibility criteria and application procedure, please visit the PCKL website.

Last date for submission of Applications: 25.03.2026 on or before 5.30 pm.

Note : Incomplete applications will be summarily rejected. Management reserves the right to cancel or modify the recruitment process without notice.

Sd/-
Additional Director (Projects)
PCKL, Bengaluru

KARNATAKA POWER TRANSMISSION CORPORATION LIMITED
CIN: U40109KA1999SGC025521
No: 948/B/Op.D/EE(E)/AE(T)/2025-26-O-159/9714-17 Date: 03-03-2026

SHORT TERM TENEDER NOTIFICATION

KPTCL invites Sealed tenders in duplicate from Manufacturer/ Experience/ Authorized service Agency for the following work.

Name of Work: **Supply of T&P materials required for carrying out routine maintenance of 110KV Transmission lines at TLM Section Belagavi and Soundatti coming under Operations Division, KPTCL, Belagavi".**

Specification/Particulars	Qty.
18mm Nylone Rope	100Mtrs.
16mm Nylone Rope	100Mtrs.
Single Sleeve Pulley (Open type 3 tonnes capacity)	04 no's.
Single Sleeve Pulley (Open type 5 tonnes capacity)	04 no's.
Hand Gloves	06 no's.
Rechargable SW LED Hand Torch	06 no's.
Grounding Sticks Extendable up to 18 feet	01 no.

(1) Last date for receipt of completed bid is at **1:30PM on 11.03.2026.**
(2) Date of time opening the bids on **11.03.2026 at 4:00 PM.** Other details can be had from the office of the undersigned.

Sd/- Executive Engineer (Ele)
Operations Division, KPTCL, Nehru Nagar, Belagavi - 590010.

KARNATAKA STATE MINERALS CORPORATION LIMITED
(Government of Karnataka Undertaking)
Regd. Office : 5th Floor, TTMC A Block, BMTC Building, Shanthinagar, K.H. Road, Bangalore - 560027. Ph : 080 -22278813 /14/15/16 , Fax : 080-22213172 Website: www.ksmc.karnataka.gov.in

No. KSMCL/PROD/TIOM/Tender/ROM-C&S/2025-26/3276 Date:04.03.2026

E-TENDER INVITATION

KSMCL invites short-term e-Tender for the work of Excavation, Crushing and Screening work at Thimmappanagudi Iron Ore Mine (TIOM), Sandur Taluk, Ballari District, Karnataka under e-tendering system through Karnataka Public Procurement Portal.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS:

Tender Reference No	**KSMCL/2025-26/SE0061**
Downloading documents from website http://kppp.karnataka.gov.in	From 05/03/2026
Last date for receiving queries	12/03/2026 at 5.00 PM
Pre-bid meeting	16/03/2026
Last date and time for uploading of e-tender in E-procurement platform on or before	04/04/2026 Up to 5:00 PM
The Technical Bid will be opened Online by the Authorized Officer on	06/04/2026 at 11:00 AM
Earnest Money Deposit (EMD)	Rs. 18.00 Lakhs

Address for communication : General Manager (P) Karnataka State Minerals Corporation Limited, TTMC, 'A' Block, 5th Floor, BMTC Building, K.H. Road, Shanthinagar, Bengaluru - 560 027. Ph: 080-22278813/14/15/16

Sd/-
GENERAL MANAGER (P)

DIPR/CP/5997/NR/2025-26

Government of India
Office of the Special Land Acquisition Officer and Competent Authority
National Highway-234 (Banavara-Huliyaru Section)
National Highways, PWD Compound, K.R. Circle, Bangalore.

PUBLIC NOTICE

In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 3D(1) and (2) of the National Highways Act, 1956 (48 of 1956) as amended by the Government of India, vide its Gazette Notification No. S.O. 5677(E) dated 06.12.2022, S.O. 5008(E) dated 22.11.2023, S.O. 5679(E) dated 06.12.2022 and S.O. 4600(E) dated 20.10.2023 The lands announced in the above notification in **Hassan district of Karnataka state** are hereby notified for the purpose of acquiring the lands mentioned in the above notification for the **construction of road (widening of 2/4 lane road, etc.) from km. 194.900 to km. 243.200 of Banavara-Huliyaru section of National Highway No.-234.**

In exercise of the powers conferred under section (1)(2)(4)(7)(a)(b)(c)(d)&RFCTLARR Act -2013 schedule 1, the award has been made for the lands mentioned in the Schedule. In addition to this, this office has already issued several notices to the account holders of the survey numbers mentioned in the announcement to submit the necessary documents and receive compensation and notices have been issued on the lands to be acquired. However, the following land owners have not submitted the documents to this office till date and have not received compensation. Therefore, it is hereby informed that the necessary certified documents should be submitted to this office **within 15 days** of the issuance of this announcement and receive compensation, failing which, without any other option, the case will be lodged in the district court of jurisdiction/legal action will be taken.

Sd/- Special Land Acquisition Officer
and Competent Authority
National Highway-234 (Banavara-Huliyaru Section)
National Highways, PWD Compound, K.R. Circle, Bangalore.

Sr. No.	Survey No.	Area (in Local Unit) (Hectares)	Name of Land Owner/ Name of Executor
DISTRICT: HASSAN			**TALUK: ARASIKERE**
Hobli: Banavara			**Village: Manakattur**
1.	95	0.3525	Government Shendivana, Nanjundappa S/o Bhairegowda, Gowramma W/o Nanjundappa, Thimmappa S/o Doddaiah & Others
Hobli: Banavara			**Village: Arehalli**
1	9	0.0379	Chandrashetty S/o Gauravshetty
2	10/9(10/4 Old)	0.0303	Doddarangappa S/o Thayi Doddalakkamma, Kenchamma W/o Jayappa
3	10/5	0.0707	Doddarangappa S/o Thayi Doddalakkamma, Jayappa Lakshmamma W/o Rangappa, Gangamma W/o Kenchamma
4	10/6	0.0707	Kamalamma A.H. W/o A.R. Basappa
5	19/1	0.1414	A.H. Puttappa S/o Hanumanthappa
6	19/2	0.2204	M.N. Raviprakash S/o Nanjunda Shetty
7	24/1	0.0406	Saraswati W/o A.N. Shekharappa
8	25	0.0242	A.N. Shekharappa S/o Nagappa, A.H. Puttappa S/o Hanumanthappa.
Hobli: Kanakatte			**Village: Shankaranahalli**
1	10	0.8688	Government Gomala, Graveyard
2	47(47/16,47/17)	0.056	Kumar Shetty, Seshamma W/o Kadurshetty, Manjunath S/o Dasashetty
Hobli: Kanakatte			**Village: Hallithimmanahalli**
1	11/1	0.0202	Narasimhappa S/o Kadappa, Erappa S/o Kadappa
2	12/6	0.0202	Erappa S/o Doddirappa
3	14	1.623	Govt, Ningappa S/o Kadirappa Basavarajappa S/o Kadirappa & Others
Hobli: Kanakatte			**Village: Kanakatte**
1	171	0.2508	Government Hullu Banni Shendivan
DISTRICT: CHIKKAMAGALURU			**TALUK: KADUR**
Hobli: Panchanahalli			**Village: Thimlapura**
1	41	0.15	Government/Forest, Ramappa S/o Soppinahalli Rangappa
2	49	0.515	Gouramma W/o Late Siddaramaiah, Siddaramaiah S/o Nannaiah, Shantaiah S/o Late Mallaiah, T. O Umesh S/o Late Omkaraiah, Siddaramaiah S/o Channabasavaiah, Channabasavaiah S/o Basavaiah, T.B Somashekaraiah S/o Late Basavaiah (49/2, 49/3, 49/4, 49/5, 49/9, 49/10)
3	40	0.06	Shendivan,
4	38/4	0.05	T. Marulappa S/o Late Thimmappa
5	38/1	0.09	As per RTC
6	38/2	0.04	T. Marulappa S/o Late| Thimmappa
7	36/3	0.02	Basavaraju S/o Shivaramappa T.B
8	35/3	0.10	Basavaraju S/o Shivaramappa T.B

Govt-appointed committee begins probe into Tirumala ghee irregularities

Panel to submit report within 45 days, based on which the government will take action

S N V SUDHIR
HYDERABAD, DHNS

PANEL'S TASK

- State government named former chief secretary Dinesh Kumar to head committee
- Panel is expected to evaluate administrative lapses and failures in enforcing tender norms

The Andhra Pradesh government-appointed one-man committee, tasked with reviewing the CBI-led Special Investigation Team (SIT)'s findings on the alleged adulteration of ghee used in Tirumala Laddu prasadam, has begun its work.

A few days ago, the state government named former chief secretary Dinesh Kumar to head the committee.

The SIT, operating under the CBI director's supervision, filed in January its final chargesheet in court and submitted an 11-page Self-Contained Note (SCN) to the government recommending action against erring officials.

The committee is expected to evaluate administrative lapses and failures in enforcing tender norms, verify due diligence and procedural compliance, assess the responsibility of officers and committee members, and propose suitable administrative or disciplinary measures.

Part of the extension building at Padmavati Guest House — an accommodation that the Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams runs on campus — has been allocated as the panel's office. It is mandated to submit its report to the government within 45 days, recommending action against those responsible for irregularities in the adulterated ghee issue.

The state government will examine these recommendations, while ongoing judicial proceedings, if any, remain unaffected.

Dinesh Kumar visited Tirumala on Tuesday and interacted with some TTD officials. He is likely to verify some records in the next few days.

According to the SIT findings, nearly 60 lakh kg of adulterated and substandard ghee were allegedly supplied to TTD between 2019 and 2024 during the previous YSRCP regime.

The probe indicated that around 22 crore laddus were prepared using the substandard ghee, in which substantial adulterants were detected.

The probe has also flagged serious lapses in relaxation and enforcement of ghee tender conditions, and pointed to alleged graft and undue gains involving certain officials associated with TTD during period.

WhatsApp chats alone can't prove cruelty for divorce: HC

MUMBAI, PTI: Divorce cannot be granted on grounds of alleged cruelty merely based on WhatsApp chats without giving the spouse a chance to rebut, the Bombay High Court has said.

A bench of Justices Bharati Dangre and Manjusha Deshpande last week quashed an order passed by the Nashik district family court allowing an application filed by a man seeking divorce from his wife on grounds of cruelty.

The woman moved the HC, challenging the family court order, claiming that the same was passed ex parte and without giving her an opportunity to oppose or put forth her arguments.

The family court, in its May 2025 order, relied on a WhatsApp chat submitted by the man in which the woman demanded that they shift from Nashik to Pune to live separately and also in which she allegedly made derogatory comments against her mother-in-law and sister-in-law.

The family court noted that the wife had used pressure tactics, emotional blackmail, and intemperate language in the WhatsApp chat and held that cruelty was meted out against the husband, and hence, he was entitled to divorce.

Hindi signage at Tiruchi rly office removed after uproar

CHENNAI, DHNS

Southern Railway's decision to name the newly built entrance of its Tiruchirappalli divisional office as Kartavya Dwar has triggered a major row in Tamil Nadu, with political leaders, including Chief Minister M K Stalin, terming the move as "Hindi imposition".

As the issue grabbed headlines and DMK cadres took to the streets against Hindi imposition, the Tiruchi Divisional Railway authorities removed the words written in Hindi, Tamil and English on the newly built entrance arch, instead of using appropriate terms in the respective languages.

Stalin said the BJP's Hindi imposition was crossing all limits as it had now begun to write Hindi names in English and Tamil.

"Their policy looks like one language, three scripts. They had already imposed the name Pavishya Nidhi Bhavan on the offices of the Employees' Provident Fund (EPFO). For criminal laws, too, they use Sanskrit names written in English script. The Union Ministry of Water Resources has been renamed Jal Shakti," Stalin added.

The BJP did the same with the name change of the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, Stalin said, adding that the Union Government's arrogance was only increasing.

"These people who provoke the self-respect of Tamils must be taught a proper lesson. They must immediately abandon this attempt to impose Hindi even in Tamil and English names and replace them with proper Tamil names. Otherwise, the Union BJP government will have to feel the heat of Tamils' anger," he added.

Judicial review can't supplant Committee of Creditors' decision: SC

ASHISH TRIPATHI
NEW DELHI, DHNS

The Supreme Court has held that the commercial wisdom of the Committee of Creditors (CoC) under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) enjoys primacy and cannot be supplanted by judicial review.

The CoC is the supreme decision-making body under the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC), 2016, comprising financial creditors who manage a company during insolvency.

The court emphasised that the National Company Law Tribunal (NCLT), the National Company Law Appellate Tribunal (NCLAT), or the Supreme Court cannot interfere with the CoC's decision.

A bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and R Mahadevan said judicial intervention beyond the narrow statutory confines undermines both predictability and finality.

While dismissing appeals filed by Torrent Power Ltd and others, the bench said in its February 27 judgment, "The IBC deliberately confines judicial review to strict statutory compliance. Respecting these limits will preserve the IBC' economic sense and ensure that insolvency remains predictable, time-bound, and market-driven."

The court noted that the resolution plan regarding the corporate debtor was approved by both the NCLT and the NCLAT and has since been implemented, leaving absolutely no scope for intervention by this court.

"The appeals before us typify the growing strategic use of the judicial system by unsuccessful resolution applicants, who seek to reopen almost every commercial decision under the guise of procedural impropriety," the bench said.

"Experience shows that unsuccessful bidders will always try to spin the CoC's commercial decisions as procedurally faulty to secure a second shot through litigation. However, courts need to remain vigilant against any temptation to expand the scope of review beyond the narrow boundaries prescribed by the IBC," it said.

MISCELLANY

◆ COMICS ◆

Blondie

ARE YOU READY TO TAKE THANKSGIVING TO ANOTHER LEVEL?
WHAT COULD YOU POSSIBLY DO TO TOP YOURSELF?
ONLY YOU COULD DREAM UP A DRUMSTICK MISTLETOE!
I'M TRYING TO STAY HUMBLE!
KISS
11-25

Hagar The Horrible

Beetle Bailey

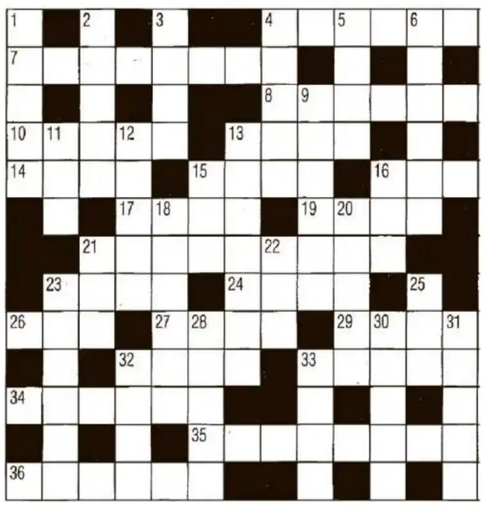
DID YOU TYPE UP THAT COPY OF MY SPEECH?
I'M SORRY, SIR, THE SYSTEM SEEMS TO BE DOWN
THAT'S THE EXCUSE BUSINESSES ALWAYS USE
YOUR PERSONAL LAPTOP ISN'T ON A SYSTEM
GREG + MORT WALKER

Peanuts

Marvin

SINCE I'M VOLUNTEERING AT YOUR NURSERY SCHOOL...
...YOU CAN EAT LUNCH EVERY DAY WITH YOUR MOMMY!
FOR THE FIRST TIME IN MY LIFE I'VE LOST MY APPETITE

CROSSWORD CHALLENGE 12367



CRYPTIC

ACROSS
4 Immobilised outright when hit (6)
7 Acts not allowed, as it happens (5,3)
8 At the end of months, they may still be hot (6)
10 Quick but soft-hearted attack! (5)
13 Looks back again (4)
14 Well balanced woman with a motherless man (4)
15 Natural depression (4)
16 He's plumb suspended! (3)
17 The benefit from a gin? (4)
19 Slight, subtle hint (4)
21 Happen to emerge embracing a sailor (4,5)
23 Is it just too too short for off-stage wear? (4)
24 Large containers of nuts (4)
26 Silly fellow climbing a tree? (3)
27 With which to open hostilities? (4)
29 Here's a horse, your majesty (4)
32 A person of vision (4)
33 Hardy monster, being difficult to decapitate? (5)
34 Ruddy wild cries at the end of the race! (6)
35 It's an inspector's characteristic to be absent-minded! (8)
36 Differing in tastes, they may still be united (6)

DOWN
1 Keep to the right in the Kentish area (5)
2 Rubbish unacceptable to vegetarians (5)
3 Ushered her out? That's not new! (4)
4 There's plenty of iron in it (5)
5 Cage makers? (4)
6 Box with skill in trickery (6)
9 Cloth woven in parts of Burslem, notably? (6)
11 A short thoroughfare in Leavenworth (3)
12 Form taken by some gold alloyed with tin? (5)
13 There may be no tears for this politician (7)
15 Dye said to fade (3)
16 The penetrative part? (3)
18 Entertains Seamus somehow (6)
20 Can her brazenness make us shy? (5)
21 What Charlie raised when it was won? (3)
22 Not the only word of exception (3)
23 Gift of a drink in an explosive case (6)
25 Stray from the proper road (3)
28 Doesn't ignore a bit of help in building a shed (5)
30 Suggestions for sorting out Sadie? (5)
31 Dirty electrical connection? (5)
32 Deposit the revised list (4)
33 With respect, they're off (4)

ACROSS
4 Entry (6)
7 Forsakes (8)
8 Frightens (6)
10 Colour (5)
13 Have on as clothing (4)
14 Croon (4)
15 Snake sound (4)
16 Male swan (3)
17 Surprise attack (4)
19 Religious image (4)
21 Staff (9)
23 Roster (4)
24 Knit with this (4)
26 Wager (3)
27 Make beer (4)
29 Aircraft manoeuvre (4)
32 Pronounce indistinctly (4)
33 Not drunk (5)
34 Hand tool (6)
35 Sanctions (8)
36 Dazed state (6)

DOWN
1 Suspends (5)
2 Shelter (5)
3 Middle East port (4)
4 Donkeys (5)
5 Tea, slang (4)
6 Behave harshly towards (4,2)
9 Gambling place (6)
11 Rend (3)
12 Wading bird (5)
13 Bereaved husband (7)
15 Belonging to him (3)
16 Mountain pass (3)
18 Suitable for crops (6)
20 Musical instrument (5)
21 Container (3)
22 At present (3)
23 Rue (6)
25 Enemy (3)
28 Measuring stick (5)
30 Very fat (5)
31 Iron (5)
32 Exchange (4)
33 Present to view, exhibit (4)

SOLUTIONS TO CROSSWORD 12366

CRYPTIC
ACROSS: 1, Forge-t 7, Indirect 8, Lion 10, Ac-I-D-ly 11, Resu-Lt. 14, Red 16, Rosie 17, Ewer 19, D-I-nah 21, Basal 22, Gully 23, Mesh 26, Strut 28, Fix 29, Chan-ce 30, Banana 31, Atom 32, Bitterly 33, Siskin.
DOWN: 1, Finale 2, Glider 3, (Des)Tiny 4, Liberal 5, Ve-nus 6, State 8, Lire 9, Old 12, Soh 13, LIV-ES 15, Aisle 18, Worth 19, Dal 20, Nay 21, Butcher('s) 22, Gun 23, Minors 24, Exam 25, H-E-aven 26, S-Cuba 27, Ra-TT-y 28, Fat 30, Bays.

EASY
ACROSS: 1, Rubber 7, Airliner 8, Zinc 10, Soiree 11, Subtle 14, Put 16, Mason 17, Most 19, Rider 21, Raven 22, Genie 23, Cost 26, Susan 28, Sad 29, Arises 30, Famine 31, Amen 32, Bulletin 33, Goatee.
DOWN: 1, Ransom 2, Beirut 3, Race 4, Albumen 5, Gnats 6, Preen 8, Zips 9, Net 12, Bar 13, Lotus 15, Livid 18, Occur 19, Ran 20, Dee 21, Reneges 22, Gas 23, Camera 24, Odin 25, Treble 26, Samba 27, Silly 28, Sam 30, Fang.

◆SU-DO-KU-6846◆

	5	4			7	9	2	
6			4					
1		9	6	5			7	
	8					6		1
7		6					3	
	6			1	5	8		3
					4			9
	2	3	8			1	5	

easy

4	5	2	8	3	1	6	7	9
8	3	6	9	4	7	2	5	1
7	1	9	2	6	5	8	4	3
3	7	5	6	1	9	4	8	2
9	2	4	5	8	3	7	1	6
1	6	8	7	2	4	3	9	5
5	8	3	1	7	2	9	6	4
6	4	1	3	9	8	5	2	7
2	9	7	4	5	6	1	3	8

SOLUTION TO 6845

To solve the puzzle: To solve a su-do-ku puzzle, every digit from1 to 9 must appear in each of the nine vertical columns, in each of the nine horizontal rows, and in each of the nine boxes.

SCRABBLE™

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E1 D2 L1 E1 V4 B3 O1	Triple Word Score		RACK 1	
I1 T1 L1 G2 R1 E1 H4	Triple Word Score		RACK 2	
H4 S1 R1 E1 S1 M3 A1	Triple Word Score		RACK 3	
R1 A1 E1 S1 S1 D2 N1	Triple Word Score		RACK 4	

PAR SCORE 215-225
by JUDD

FOUR RACK TOTAL
TIME LIMIT: 20 MIN

DIRECTIONS: Make a 2- to 7-letter word from the letters in each row. Add points of each word, using scoring directions at right. 7-letter words get 50-point bonus. "Blanks" used as any letter have no point value. All Judd's words are in the Collins English Dictionary. JUDD'S SOLUTION TOMORROW

YESTERDAY'S SOLUTION

V4 I1 V4 I1 D2 L1 Y4	RACK 1 =	67
S1 A1 L1 V4 A1 G2 E1	RACK 2 =	63
C3 H4 O1 P3 P3 Y4	RACK 3 =	36
Q10 U1 A1 R1 T1 I1 C3	RACK 4 =	104
PAR SCORE 175-185	JUDD'S TOTAL	270

HITORI-3300

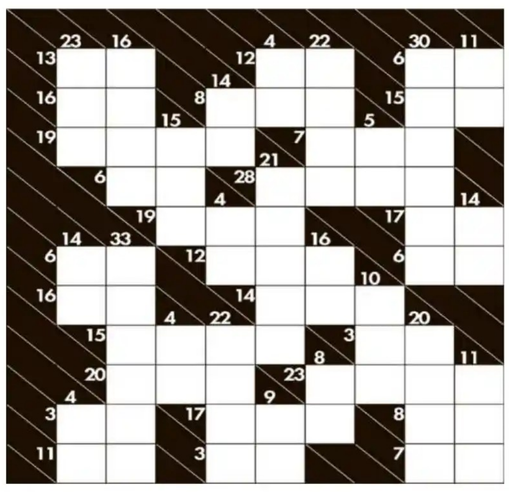
4	6	2	5	8	8	3	4
1	4	4	7	2	8	4	5
8	3	7	4	1	6	4	2
3	8	8	1	5	8	7	4
7	1	4	3	4	2	6	8
2	3	1	4	5	3	5	4
6	4	5	5	7	5	2	1
2	7	5	8	4	4	1	4

SOLUTION TO 3299

6	8	7	3	2	1	■	4
■	5	■	6	■	8	4	7
5	■	2	■	6	7	3	■
8	7	6	5	3	4	■	1
7	6	■	2	4	■	8	3
■	2	4	8	1	5	6	■
4	3	■	1	8	■	5	6
■	4	8	■	5	6	7	2

To solve the puzzle: Eliminate numbers by filling in squares so that remaining cells in that row or column do not repeat that number more than once. Filled-in cells cannot be horizontally or vertically adjacent. The un-filled cells must form a single component connected horizontally and vertically.

KAKURO- 3300



SOLUTION TO 3299

To solve the puzzle: Put a number from 1 through 9 in a cell. No zeros. A number in a cell separated by diagonal line tells the sum of numbers in consecutive cells at its right or downward. No number may appear more than once in consecutive cells.

SU DO KU X - 3846

■	9			2				■
	■	6	1	4			■	3
		■				■		
			5		■			4
7	2			8	4	6		
6			■		2	5		
		■				3		
9	■	8	3			2	■	
■							1	9

SOLUTION TO 3845

8	2	6	9	4	5	3	1	7
9	7	5	8	3	1	2	6	4
1	4	3	7	2	6	8	5	9
4	5	8	6	7	2	9	3	1
7	9	1	3	5	8	4	2	6
6	3	2	4	1	9	7	8	5
5	6	9	2	8	4	1	7	3
2	1	7	5	9	3	6	4	8
3	8	4	1	6	7	5	9	2

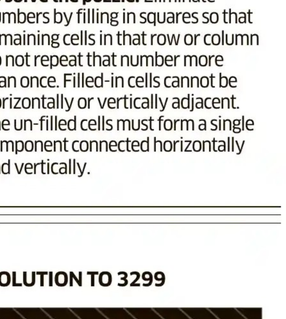
To solve the puzzle: The objective is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column, each 3x3 box and each shaded diagonal line contains the same number only once.

JUMBLE®

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME
By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

MCIBL
FRWAH
ZANTAS
PRYOTH


You'll see all the hot and cold water locations and the drains on each floor.
Wow! This is so easy to understand.
HC
HC
SOUP
8 25
TO PLAN THE NEW HOME'S PLUMBING SYSTEM, THEY CREATED A ---

Get the free JUST JUMBLE app • Follow us on Twitter @PlayJumble

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer here: ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( ) ( )

(Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: CROOK PRESS PRIMER DEVOUR
Answer: The chef felt her version of split pea was truly — "SOUP-ERIOR"

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Iran war disrupts global ocean freight and air cargo supply chains beyond oil

Computer chips, pharmaceuticals and other goods face delays

NEW YORK, AP/PTI

The Iran war has effectively halted oil tanker movement in the key Strait of Hormuz. But it's also disrupting the wider global supply chain beyond oil, affecting everything from pharmaceuticals from India, semiconductors from Asia and oil-derived products like fertilisers that come from West Asia.

Cargo ships are stuck in the Gulf or making a much longer detour around the southern tip of Africa. Planes carrying air cargo out of West Asia are grounded. And the longer the war drags on, the more likely it is that there will be shortages and price increases on a wide range of goods.

"This is really causing some major impacts within the global supply chain," said Patrick Penfield, professor of supply chain practice at Syracuse University. "As this conflict keeps progressing, you'll start to see some shortages, you'll see some major price increases."

Stalled at sea

Clarksons Research, which tracks shipping data, estimates that about 3,200 ships, or about 4 per cent of global ship tonnage, are idle inside the Persian Gulf, but that includes about 1,231 that likely only operate within the Gulf. About 500 ships, or 1 per cent of global tonnage, are currently "waiting" outside the Gulf in ports off the coast of the United Arab Emirates and Oman, according to the firm.

"The supply chain is kind of like a long train with many cars, and each car represents, let's say, a port in the world. Well, if one car gets derailed, it can very often have a domino effect on many other cars behind it or in front of it," he said. "So, although we only have a small number of ports affected by this military action, it can really have a big effect on the total supply chain."

On Tuesday, President Donald Trump pitched a plan aimed at getting oil and trade moving again through the Strait. Trump said on social media he ordered the US International Development Finance Corp. to provide political risk insurance for tankers carrying oil and other goods through the Persian Gulf "at a very reasonable price." Political risk insurance is a type of coverage intended to protect firms against financial losses caused by unstable political conditions, government actions, or violence. Marine insurers had been cancelling or raising rates for insurance in the region.

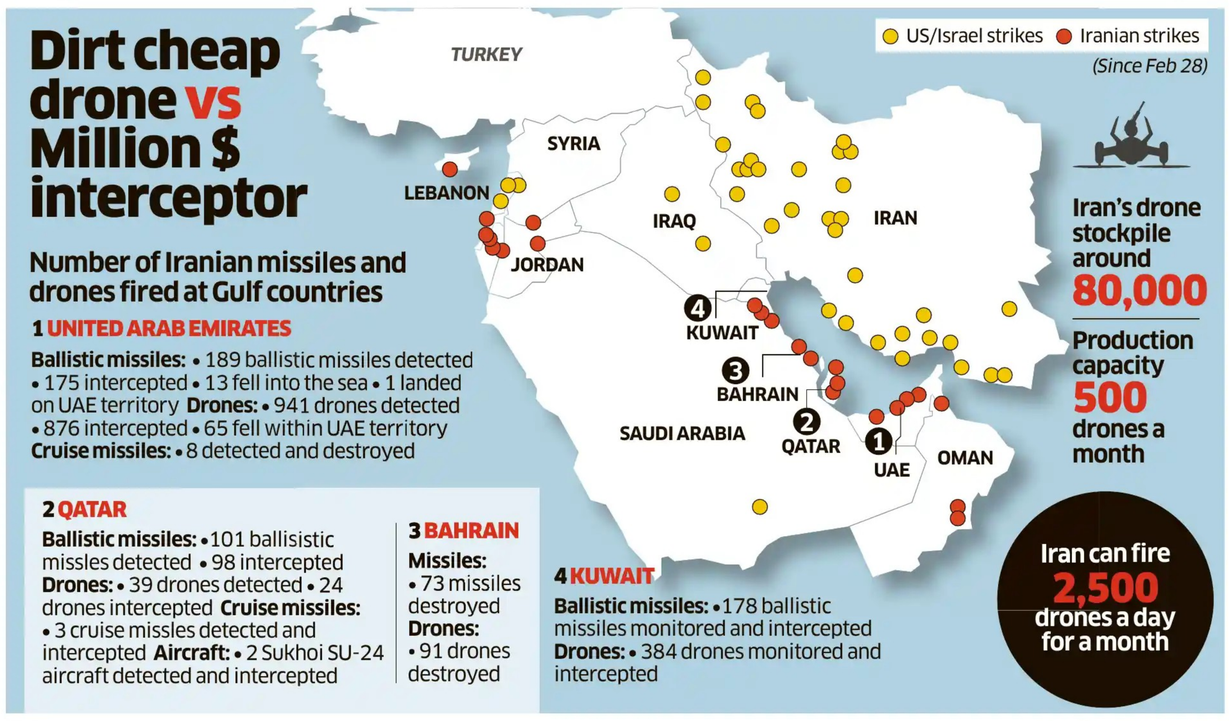
A wide range of products is shipped through West Asia. Along with about 20 per cent of the world's oil that comes from the region, products made with natural gas, such as petrochemical feedstock - used to make plastic and rubber - and nitrogen fertiliser come from West Asia. Pharmaceuticals exported from India and semiconductors and batteries exported from Asia to the rest of the world are all shipped through the region and could face delays.

Higher costs

In addition to constraints on the Strait of Hormuz, the instability has put a damper on transit in the Red Sea and the Suez Canal, which had just begun to see more transit after years of instability due to Houthi attacks on ships in the region.

Air cargo has also been constrained. Closed airspace and airports in countries including the UAE, Qatar, Bahrain, Kuwait, Iraq, and Iran have stranded tens of thousands of people and cargo. The amount of goods that travel through the air typically accounts for less than 1 per cent of all freight moving globally, but the products that do travel by air tend to be perishable or high-value goods like pharmaceuticals, electronics and produce that together account for about 35 per cent of the world trade value, Boeing estimated in its World Air Cargo Forecast.

The longer these airports remain closed, the greater the potential disruption to the economy if these sensitive shipments don't arrive or have to be rerouted. Flights through West Asian airport hubs are a key route for passengers and cargo from India. Henry Harteveldt, an airline industry analyst with Atmosphere Research Group, said it's going to be hard to get to India now.


Dirt cheap drone vs Million $ interceptor
Number of Iranian missiles and drones fired at Gulf countries
1 UNITED ARAB EMIRATES
Ballistic missiles: • 189 ballistic missiles detected • 175 intercepted • 13 fell into the sea • 1 landed on UAE territory Drones: • 941 drones detected • 876 intercepted • 65 fell within UAE territory
Cruise missiles: • 8 detected and destroyed
2 QATAR
Ballistic missiles: • 101 ballisistic missles detected • 98 intercepted
Drones: • 39 drones detected • 24 drones intercepted Cruise missiles: • 3 cruise missles detected and intercepted Aircraft: • 2 Sukhoi SU-24 aircraft detected and intercepted
3 BAHRAIN
Missiles: • 73 missiles destroyed
Drones: • 91 drones destroyed
4 KUWAIT
Ballistic missiles: • 178 ballistic missiles monitored and intercepted
Drones: • 384 drones monitored and intercepted
US/Israel strikes
Iranian strikes
(Since Feb 28)
TURKEY
SYRIA
LEBANON
JORDAN
IRAQ
IRAN
KUWAIT
BAHRAIN
QATAR
SAUDI ARABIA
UAE
OMAN
Iran's drone stockpile around 80,000
Production capacity 500 drones a month
Iran can fire 2,500 drones a day for a month

DH GRAPNICS: GURU PRASATH R

US withdraws non-emergency staff from consulates in Pak

ISLAMABAD, PTI: The United States announced on Wednesday the withdrawal of non-emergency staff from its consulates in the Pakistani cities of Karachi and Lahore due to security concerns.

The decision came just days after protestors tried to storm US consulates and the embassy after the killing of Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei in US-Israeli joint air strikes.

"The Department of State ordered non-emergency US government employees and the family members of US government personnel from US Consulates Lahore and Karachi to leave Pakistan due to safety risks," the US Mission in Pakistan said in a statement.

It said there was no change to the status of its embassy in Islamabad.

Spain PM says 'no to war' in Iran despite Trump's trade threat

MADRID, AP/PTI: Spain's Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez again criticised the US and Israel's military actions in Iran, standing firm on Wednesday against trade threats from Washington and warning that the war in West Asia risked "playing Russian roulette" with millions of lives.

"We are not going to be complicit in something that is bad for the world and is also contrary to our values and interests, just out of fear of reprisals from someone," Sanchez said in a televised address.

President Donald Trump on Tuesday threatened to end US trade with Spain because of Spain's refusal to allow the US to use joint military bases in the country in its attacks on Iran. Sanchez has called the US and Israeli attacks on Iran an "unjustifiable" and "dangerous" military intervention.

Iran's Revolutionary Guard threatens 'complete destruction of region's military, economic infra'

DUBAI, AP/PTI

The United States and Israel hit Iran's capital and other cities in multiple airstrikes on Wednesday, the fifth day of the war with Iran. Israel targeted the Iranian leadership and security forces as the Islamic Republic responded with missile barrages and drone attacks on Israel and across the region.

Iran's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard issued its most intense threat yet as the war escalated, saying it was prepared for the "complete destruction of the region's military and economic infrastructure".

Tehran residents woke to dawn blasts, and Iranian state television showed the ruins of a building in the centre of the capital. The Shiite seminary city of Qom and multiple other cities were also targeted.

With fighter jets roaring overhead, those still in Tehran looked anxiously to the skies. One man who ran a clothing shop said he did not know what to do.

Iran could hamper Strait of Hormuz traffic with drones for months

REUTERS: Iranian drone attacks could disrupt the Strait of Hormuz for months, but how long the Islamic Republic can sustain its missile barrage is less clear, according to intelligence sources.

Since the US and Israel attacked Iran on Saturday, Iran has launched hundreds of missiles and more than 1,000 drones at Gulf states allied with Washington. Most were intercepted by air defences, but some residential and commercial buildings, infrastructure and US military bases have sustained damage.

Tehran is a major drone manufacturer and has the industrial capacity to produce around 10,000 per month, according to the Centre for Information Resilience.

South Africa's anti-apartheid veteran Lekota dies at 77

JOHANNESBURG, AP/PTI: South African anti-apartheid veteran and former defence minister Mosiuoa "Terror" Lekota has died at the age of 77 after a long illness, his political party said on Wednesday.

Mosiuoa Lekota

Lekota was a prominent activist against white minority rule in South Africa and served eight years in prison on Robben Island alongside other jailed anti-apartheid figures, including Nelson Mandela, from 1974 to 1982. Lekota was a fiery member of various political youth organisations during apartheid and was jailed even after he was released from Robben Island for his continued anti-apartheid activism.

He served as South Africa's minister of defence from 1999 to 2008 and was also the chairperson of the African National Congress.

Nepal to hold first election today since Gen Z protests

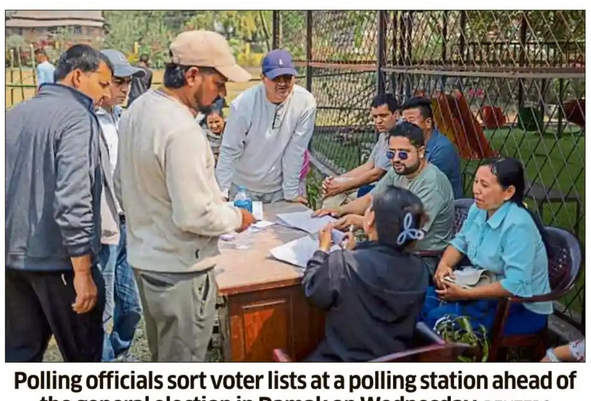
65 parties and over 3,400 candidates in fray

KATHMANDU, PTI

Tens of thousands of Nepalese will vote on Thursday in crucial general elections, the first since a violent Gen Z-led protest toppled the K P Sharma Oli-led government last year.

Over 18.9 million eligible Nepalese will exercise their franchise to elect the 275-member House of Representatives from among the 3,406 candidates vying for 165 seats under direct voting and 3,135 candidates vying for 110 seats through proportionate voting.

The voting will start at 7 am on Thursday and conclude at 5 pm. The counting will start immediately after the ballot boxes are collected.



Polling officials sort voter lists at a polling station ahead of the general election in Damak on Wednesday. REUTERS

Addressing a press meet here on the eve of the polls, Acting Election Commissioner Ram Prasad Bhandari said all preparations for the election have been completed and urged voters to participate actively and enthusiastically in the democratic exercise.

He said foolproof security arrangements have been made with the deployment of more than 300,000 security personnel under an integrated security plan in coordination with the Nepal Army. Bhandari expressed confidence that voters would exercise their franchise in large numbers.

"This time the voting percentage will increase, and the percentage of invalid ballot papers will also decline due to improved voter education launched by the commission," he said.

He also sought cooperation from all sides to conduct the election successfully.

Pakistan targets Bagram airbase

ISLAMABAD, PTI

Pakistan targeted the famed Bagram airbase in Afghanistan as its operation was going against the Afghan Taliban over their alleged failure to stop terrorist attacks from their soil, media reports said on Wednesday.

Pakistan launched Operation Ghazab lil Haq on the night of February 26, following alleged Afghan Taliban attacks on 53 locations along the over 2,600 km border.

State-run PTV in a post on X said that Pakistan carried out a "major attack on Bagram Air Base" as it was giving a "befitting response to Afghan Taliban aggression". "Pakistan continues to conduct vigorous ground and air operations against the unprovoked aggression of the Afghan Taliban," it said.

PTV often quoted unnamed security sources for reports on the Afghanistan attacks, but for the Bagram attack, it quoted The New York Times.

"An aircraft hangar and two warehouses at Bagram Air Base were destroyed in a Pakistani attack, satellite images of which have also emerged," PTV reported, quoting The NYT.

It further said that Afghanistan's Ministry of Defence also confirmed the Pakistani airstrike, adding that Pakistan carried out more than 50 airstrikes on military targets in Afghanistan in the past week.

Quoting defence experts, the channel further said that Pakistan's "successful operation" on Bagram Air Base caused heavy damage. "By targeting Bagram Air Base, Pakistan sent a clear message to the Afghan Taliban regime that it can operate anywhere in Afghanistan," it quoted an unnamed defence expert as saying. The channel further said despite Pakistan's repeated warnings, terrorism continues from Afghanistan.

Separately, sources said that Pakistan security forces carried out targeted attacks on the defence position of the Afghan Taliban on the border with Balochistan province on March 3-4, targeting the "hideouts and posts that were being used by outlawed elements and their facilitators".

UK arrests 3 suspected Chinese spies

LONDON, AP/PTI

Three men suspected of spying for China were arrested on Wednesday, London police said.

The three were arrested for assisting a foreign intelligence service in violation of the National Security Act of 2023. Police did not name the suspects because they haven't been charged. But they said one was a 39-year-old arrested in London, another was a 68-year-old arrested in Powys, Wales and the third, a 43-year-old, was arrested in Pontyclun, Wales.

They are the latest in a number of arrests in the UK of people accused of spying for China. MI5 issued an alert to lawmakers in November, warning that Chinese agents were making "targeted" efforts to recruit and cultivate spies.

Oxford museum returns 16th-century idol to India

LONDON, PTI

In a major first, the University of Oxford's Ashmolean Museum has returned a 16th-century bronze idol to India for its journey back to the temple in Tamil Nadu where it belongs.

The sacred icon of Saint Thirumankai Alvar was acquired by the museum at a Sotheby's auction in 1967 before it was alerted to its origins at the Shri Soundararaja Perumal temple in Thadikombu by an independent researcher in November 2019.

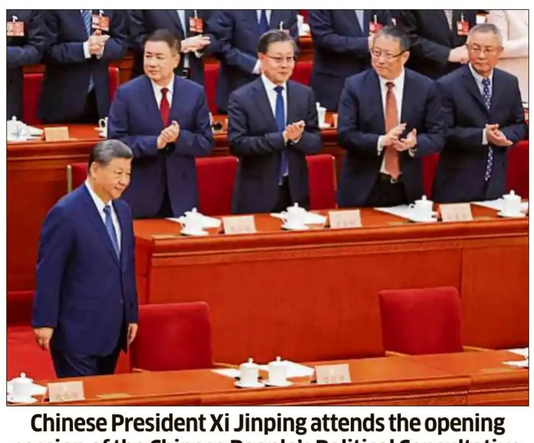
This led to the museum requesting the High Commission of India in London to formally confirm its provenance, with the process concluding in a formal handover ceremony at India House on Tuesday evening. "This is a really significant moment for the Ashmolean Museum," said Dr Xa Sturgis, director of Britain's first public museum dating back to the 17th century.

"It was over five years ago that we first became aware that there was evidence that this bronze had been photographed in the temple in Tamil Nadu. At that point it became evident that there was no legitimate way in which it could have left India.

"And, even though the museum acquired this bronze in 1967 in good faith, we opened a conversation with the Indian High Commission about the possibility of returning this object to India," he said.

Believed to have been stolen and replaced with a modern replica, the bronze sculpture is now set for its return journey after experts from the museum travelled to India to establish its origins with the Archaeological Survey of India, Tamil Nadu officials and temple authorities.

WORLD AT A GLANCE



Chinese President Xi Jinping attends the opening session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in Beijing on Wednesday. REUTERS

China kicks off its parliament season after massive purges

▸ China on Wednesday commenced its annual parliament season amid international turmoil over the US-Iran war, massive purges of the military by President Xi Jinping and major plans to develop new productive forces like AI to revitalise the slowing-down economy, PTI reports from Beijing.

Xi, 72, who is into his unprecedented third term in office with little indication of any organised political challenge from within the ruling Communist Party and the powerful military, attended the opening session of the national advisory body - the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), comprising over 2500 civil society, party, and military officials. The opening session marks the beginning of a fortnight-long annual political season in China during which the leadership appears in public and takes part in internal debates. Xi's presence was regarded as significant as he appeared for the first time along with party officials of all ranks besides PLA members and sat through the proceedings after the recent massive purges of the Chinese military.

Interim relief for UK's BHS Mandir

▸ A 40-year-old Hindu temple and community centre in UK's Peterborough city concerned about its future due to the local council's decision to sell the complex it rents to the highest bidder has won an interim injunction from the London High Court, PTI reports from London.

Bharat Hindu Samaj Mandir, established in the city's New England Complex in 1986 and serving over 13,000 Hindus from across the wider region of Cambridgeshire, Norfolk and Lincolnshire, had mounted the legal challenge to save its home in the eastern England city. Justice Michael Fordham issued an order last week blocking "any irreversible step" in relation to the disposal of the New England Complex.

A newly identified marble bust by Michelangelo Buonarroti is displayed inside the Basilica of Santa Agnese Outside the Walls in Rome on Wednesday, centuries after the work had gone unattributed. AFP

No UK study visa for some nations

▸ The UK on Wednesday imposed a study visa ban on four countries accused of using the route as a backdoor entry to seek permanent refuge in the country, as part of a wider clampdown on the soaring rates of asylum applications, PTI reports from London.

The so-called "emergency brake" on student visas applies to Afghanistan, Cameroon, Myanmar and Sudan, with Afghans also subject to a skilled worker visa ban following a major surge in asylum claims from these countries. The move comes as United Kingdom Home Secretary Shabana Mahmood introduces new legislation in Parliament this week, with the visa brake to be introduced via an Immigration Rules change on Thursday to come into force on March 26.

Russian-flagged tanker sinks

▸ A Russian-flagged tanker carrying liquefied natural gas exploded and erupted in flames before sinking in the Mediterranean Sea off the coast of Libya, authorities in the North African country said on Wednesday, AP/PTI reports from Cairo.

The tanker was under Western sanctions, suspected to be part of Russia's shadow fleet of energy tankers trying to bypass sanctions imposed on Moscow over its war in Ukraine. According to the Libyan Maritime Authority, there was a "sudden explosion, followed by a massive fire" on the Arctic Metagaz on Tuesday. The tanker, carrying 61,000 tons of LNG, "completely sank" between Libya and Malta, a statement said. All 30 crew members were rescued.

Models present a creation for Courreges during the Women's Ready to Wear Fall/Winter 2026-2027 show at Paris Women Fashion Week on Wednesday. AFP

Rupee hits fresh all-time low of 92.35 against US dollar

Sensex tumbles 1,123 points as war drags markets

UMA KANNAN
BENGALURU, DHNS

The Indian rupee on Wednesday recorded its steepest two-session decline since May 2025, tumbling to an all-time intraday low of Rs 92.35 before closing at Rs 92.16 against the US dollar. The currency remains under pressure amid a surge in oil prices and a widening trade deficit. Its previous close was at Rs 91.49 on Monday, and the forex market was closed on Tuesday on account of Holi. Its previous low was Rs 91.98 on January 31.

This prevailing risk-off sentiment, coupled with high energy costs, is expected to keep the currency under pressure in the near term. Investors are closely monitoring the longevity of the West Asia conflict, as a prolonged standoff would likely drive up the import cost of energy and precious metals, while hindering export growth, Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst, HDFC Securities, said.

He added that Spot USDINR faces immediate resistance at 92.60, while key support is firmly established at 91.80.

With India being a major importer of crude from the Gulf region, the sharp rise in oil prices — which jumped nearly 10% to the $76-78 range — has pressured the rupee by increasing the country's import bill and widening trade deficit concerns, Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst — Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities, said.

The currency had earlier shown some stability following the Union Budget and the recent US-India trade deal, but the renewed spike in crude prices has reversed part of those gains. If geopolitical tensions persist and oil prices remain elevated, pressure on the rupee could continue in the near term.

Technically, the rupee is expected to trade in a 91.50-92.75 range, with volatility likely to remain high depending on crude price movement, global risk sentiment, and capital flows, Trivedi added.

Meanwhile, Sensex tumbled 1,122.66 points or 1.40% to settle at 79,116.19. On Wednesday, it opened over 1,700 points lower, and the Nifty opened nearly

500 points lower, before settling at 24,480.50.

Among sectors, almost all the major sectoral indices closed in the negative territory, but the Metal Index lost the most, shedding over 4%. Technically, after a gap-down open, the market hovered between the 24,300/78,500 to 24,600/79,500 range, Shrikant Chouhan, Head Equity Research, Kotak Securities, said.

With this two-day fall in the stock market (Monday and Wednesday), investors' wealth eroded by Rs 16.32 lakh crore.

Ankit Patel, Co-founder & Partner — Arunasset Investment Services, said the biggest concern currently is the closure of the Strait of Hormuz. Roughly 2.1-2.5 million barrels of India's oil imports — about half of our total crude imports — move through this route. Any closure or disruption would immediately push oil prices higher and create supply uncertainty. "Higher crude prices have a direct macroeconomic impact on India. For every $1 rise in oil prices, India's current account deficit typically widens by roughly $2 billion. A wider current account deficit places pressure on the rupee and complicates macro stability," Patel said.

Bond markets have already begun reacting. The country's 10-year government bond yield has moved toward 6.7%, as investors price in higher inflation and external vulnerability from elevated oil prices. Rising yields increase the government's borrowing costs and eventually push up lending rates across the economy. In the near term, this environment could keep markets volatile, but the key variables investors should watch, are oil prices, bond yields, and currency stability, he further added.

Volatile markets and IPO-bound firms

Will volatile markets prompt IPO-bound companies to postpone their plans? Analysts said most companies will go as per their plan, and if volatility continues, they might reassess plans. From Flipkart to Rapido, according to reports, at least 24 companies are finalising their IPOs.

Shashank Udupa, Fund Manager at Smallcase, said, new-age companies, especially tech and platform businesses, are very sensitive to valuations. Their pricing depends on growth expectations and liquidity. When markets get cautious, investors naturally move toward profitable, cash-generating companies and pull back from long-duration growth stories.

"We saw this play out in 2022-23, when aggressive rate hikes, liquidity drained, and the IPO market slowed sharply," he said, adding that cash-burning companies may struggle in this environment. Those nearing breakeven with solid unit economics can still find demand.

"If the geopolitical tensions stabilise and don't disrupt energy supply meaningfully, volatility should gradually cool. What we're seeing now is largely risk repricing," Udupa added.

Geopolitical risks anchor gold's safe-haven sheen

Analysts see $4,400-5,600 range

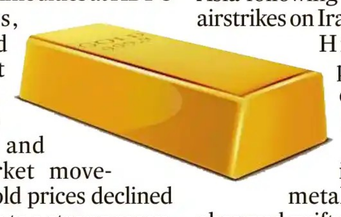
HRITHIK KIRAN BAGADE
BENGALURU, DHNS

Geopolitical tensions in West Asia have once again reinforced gold's safe-haven appeal, driving sharp volatility and renewed investor positioning amid escalating uncertainty. With the conflict intensifying and currency markets fluctuating, analysts expect prices to consolidate within a broad $4,400-5,600 per ounce range in the near-to-medium term.

International spot gold traded around $5,175-5,186 per ounce on Wednesday, rebounding from a March 3 low of about $5,136. The earlier decline followed a strong recovery in the US dollar and rising Treasury yields, even as hostilities in the region deepened.

"Gold remained highly volatile as CME prices saw a sharp sell-off from $5,400 to $5,000, before recovering toward $5,200. MCX Gold mirrored the swings, trading in a wide Rs 1,59,000-1,70,000 range and currently near Rs 1,64,000. Volatility is expected to remain elevated due to the conflict in West Asia and failed US-Iran nuclear talks," said Jateen Trivedi, VP Research Analyst — Commodity and Currency, LKP Securities.

Saumil Gandhi, Senior Analyst — Commodities at HDFC Securities, attributed the recent correction largely to currency and bond market movements. "Gold prices declined sharply due to a strong recovery in the US dollar and rising Treasury yields. The move came as renewed inflation concerns reduced demand for safe-haven assets, despite ongoing geopolitical tensions."



He noted that energy markets are shaping inflation expectations. Higher crude prices have revived concerns that inflationary pressures may persist, potentially slowing the pace of rate cuts by the US Federal Reserve. That outlook has supported the dollar and Treasury yields, weighing on non-yielding assets such as gold.

Despite near-term pressure from stronger yields, geopolitical risk continues to underpin bullion demand. Deveya Gaglani, Senior Research Analyst — Commodities, Axis Securities, pointed to the broader recovery following January's steep correction. "We saw Comex Gold fall nearly 20% from $5,598 on January 29 to $4,402 on February 2. More recently, prices reached $5,419 on March 2. This recovery is primarily attributed to heightened geopolitical concerns in West Asia following the US-Israel airstrikes on Iran."

Historically, periods of conflict have triggered capital flows into precious metals. "We have observed swift profit booking as some expect the war may not last long. However, if the conflict does not resolve within 10-15 days, gold is likely to benefit again," Gaglani said, adding that prolonged instability could create wider economic repercussions across the region.

Gandhi reiterated that the current decline appears to be a short-term correction rather than the start of a broader downtrend. "We expect gold to consolidate within a broad $4,400-5,600 range. Prices may spike during heightened tensions and ease when concerns subside."

"Gold's decline may not persist. Worsening geopolitical tensions are supporting safe-haven demand, while a weak global growth outlook and strong central-bank buying could help prices stabilise and rebound despite recent selloffs," echoed Hareesh V, Head of Commodity Research, Geojit Investments Limited.

Ziff Davis to sell connectivity arm to Accenture for $1.2 billion

BENGALURU, REUTERS: US-based digital media and internet firm Ziff Davis on Tuesday said it has agreed to sell its Connectivity division — the unit behind brands such as Ookla, Speedtest and Downdetector — to Accenture for $1.2 billion in cash.

Proceeds from the transaction are expected to be used for general corporate purposes and capital allocation activities, in line with the firm's debt agreements, Ziff Davis said.

The company added the transaction is expected to close in the coming months.

Moneyview files DRHP for IPO; seeks to raise Rs 1,500 crore

BENGALURU, DHNS: Fintech unicorn Moneyview has filed the draft red herring prospectus (DRHP) with Sebi to raise funds through an IPO, which combines a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating up to Rs 1,500 crore, with an offer for sale (OFS) of up to 13.6 crore equity shares by the selling shareholders.

The firm intends to utilise the net proceeds from the fresh issue towards funding growth in its financial services business, including Rs 650 crore to drive loan disbursals under Default Loss Guarantee arrangements, Rs 450 crore for investment in its material subsidiary, Whizdm Finance Private Limited, to augment its capital base, and the balance towards general corporate purposes.

Moneyview, founded in 2014 by IIT Delhi graduates Puneet Agarwal and Sanjay Aggarwal, is backed by marquee investors like Accel, Tiger Global, Ribbit Capital and others.

Its app provides access to a full suite of financial products. The company has been profitable since FY2022 and has continued to strengthen its growth momentum, recording a 61% YoY increase in PBT in FY2025, compared to FY2024.

Moneyview accounted for about 11% of total digital unsecured personal loan sanctions in FY2025 and reported the highest AUM in the digital unsecured personal loan segment among unlisted peers. The company reported revenue of Rs 2,379 crore and net profit of Rs 240 crore for FY2025.

Qatar shuts LNG output, supplies to India hit

AJITH ATHRADY
NEW DELHI, DHNS

Qatar has halted production of LNG after its key facilities were targeted in attacks amid the escalating West Asia conflict, severely disrupting supplies to India and squeezing feedstock for several domestic industries.

India depends on long-term LNG contracts with Qatar to meet a substantial portion of its gas requirements. The temporary suspension of cargoes has led to supply cuts of up to 40% for a range of industrial consumers and city gas distribution (CGD) companies.

While some industries can switch to alternative fuels, though costlier, the CNG sector — which serves retail consumers through city gas networks, faces significant challenges. CGD operators have cautioned that replacing contracted Qatari volumes with spot LNG priced at more than double the contracted rate could undermine CNG's price advantage and result in a permanent shift of customers to electric vehicles.

India's largest LNG importer Petronet LNG Ltd is unable to dispatch vessels to Qatar to ferry LNG as the Strait of Hormuz is all but closed. Qatar supplies 40% of the 27 million tonnes a year of LNG that India imports annually.

Meanwhile, the city gas firms have written to government-owned gas utility GAIL, expressing concerns over the availability of domestic gas and LNG to meet the requirements of CNG for automobiles and piped cooking gas for households.

QatarEnergy has also suspended LNG production at Ras Laffan, the world's largest LNG export facility (which is a major supplier to India), following an Iranian drone attack on its installations.

In a filing to exchanges, Petronet LNG stated that it has issued a force majeure notice to QatarEnergy, citing the inability to send its LNG carriers — Disha, Raahi, and Aseem — to the loading port at Ras Laffan. QatarEnergy has reciprocated by issuing a force majeure notice to Petronet, attributing the disruption to ongoing hostilities in the region.

While domestically-produced natural gas meets just about half of the demand, India gathers the rest through LNG imports.

India has sufficient stock of LPG

India has comfortable stocks of LPG — sufficient to last 25-30 days, says officials in the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas. Officials insist that there is no alarming situation with regard to LPG. However, the government is closely monitoring the situation and is in touch with several market players to keep track of supplies.

In FY25, India's LPG imports stood at around 20.67 mt and in first half of FY26, it reached 10.84 mt.

Although the country relies on imports for around 80-85% of its LPG requirements — primarily from Gulf suppliers — India has begun diversifying its sources by importing from the US and Norway as well, said officials.

The ministry reports that India has over 33 crore domestic LPG consumers.

'Russia ready to divert oil to India amid supply shocks'

NEW DELHI, REUTERS: Russia is ready to divert oil to India to offset West Asian supply disruptions, with about 9.5 million barrels of Russian crude in vessels near Indian waters and able to arrive within weeks, an industry source told Reuters.

The source declined to say where the non-Russian fleet cargoes were originally headed, but said they could deliver to India within weeks, giving relief to refiners.

An Indian government source said New Delhi was scouting for alternative supply to prepare for continuing conflict in West Asia beyond 10-15 days.

The industry source said Russia was ready to help India meet up to 40% of its crude needs.

Services sector growth eases in Feb on slower improvement in demand, pick-up in inflation

NEW DELHI, PTI: India's services sector growth moderated slightly in February, as new order growth slowed to a 13-month low amid slower improvement in demand and a pick-up in inflation, a monthly survey said on Wednesday.

The seasonally-adjusted HSBC India Services PMI Business Activity Index eased to 58.1 in February, from 58.5 in January.

"India's Services PMI registered 58.1 in February, largely unchanged from January's 58.5, signalling another month of robust expansion in the sector. While new order growth slowed to a 13-month low amid rising competition, service providers saw a notable pick-up in international sales and responded with increased hiring to meet operational needs," said Pranjul Bhandari, Chief India Economist at HSBC.

According to panel members, greater client inquiries and marketing efforts supported sales at some units, while a few companies suggested that an increasingly competitive environment dampened growth.

Exports outperformed, as services firms reported gains from many parts of the world, including Canada, Germany, mainland China, Singapore, the UAE, the UK and the US. On average, international sales expanded at the fastest pace since last August.

On the price front, February data highlighted the sharpest increase in operating expenses among Indian services firms in two-and-a-half years. Accordingly, prices charged for services were raised to the greatest extent in six months.

"Input and output price inflation accelerated, with firms passing higher expenses, particularly for food and labour, on to customers, yet business confidence climbed to its highest level in a year as companies looked to broaden their market presence," Bhandari said.

Meanwhile, the aggregate business activity across India rose at the fastest pace in three months during February, buoyed by a substantial improvement in demand and an associated upturn in new business intakes.

The HSBC India Composite PMI Output Index was up from 58.4 in January to 58.9 in February.

"Overall, the composite PMI rose to 58.9, buoyed by strong momentum in manufacturing," Bhandari said.

The rate of new order growth at the composite level was broadly similar to that seen around the turn of the year, while job creation accelerated to its strongest since last October.

On the price front, there were quicker increases in both input costs and output charges. Respective rates of inflation climbed to nine- and six-month highs.

Government of Karnataka
Executive Engineer
Panchayat Raj Engineering Division Belagavi

No.PRE/BD/PB-2/Tender-68/2025-26/7682 Date: 03-03-2026

Tender Invited (E- Procurement)

Executive Engineer, Panchayat Raj Engineering Division, Belagavi hereby invited tender from Registered Contractors for the Item rates through kppp Portal. There are total 3 **(Improvement of road from Chainage Km 0.00 to Km 3.00. on Goutan Road at Teggihaal Village in Saundatti Taluk Belagavi Dist (22698), 25114, 25123)** work have been called, Standard of tender documents KW-1,2,3 for price of Highest and Lowest Estimated **Cost Rs. 150.00 Lakhs** and **Rs. 12.00 Lakh** respectively and also Highest and Lowest EMD has As Per E-procurement for each work. The last date for Submission of any Quarries is **16-03-2026 17:28 PM**, the last date for submission of tender bid is on **16-03-2026 17:28 PM**. Opening of technical bid is on **18-03-2026 11-00 AM** and Expected Financial bid will be opened on **18-03-2026 11:30 AM.** For any other information/ clarifications please contact the below signed office, and also search internet for kppp-Portal website **http://kppp-proc.karnataka.gov.in**

Sd/-
Executive Engineer
Panchayat Raj Engineering Division
Belagavi

DIPR/BELAGAVI/1986/
2025-26/DESHPANDEPUBLICITY

GREATER BENGALURU AUTHORITY
Chief Health Officer (PH), Annex-3, Ground Floor,
GBA Head Office, Bengalurur - 560 002.

No: GBA/2025-26/IND0001/CALL-2/IND0002/CALL-2/IND0007/IND0006 Date: 04.03.2026

TENDER NOTIFICATION

Greater Bengaluru Authority invites tender from eligible bidders for Short term Tender for the supply of 243-Refrigerator-180-200 Litres, 243-Centrifuge and 237-UPS and 230-CCTV to Namma Clinics of Five Corporations under GBA.

Following is Events of Bid Process: 1) Tender Reference No.: **GBA/2025-26/IND0001/CALL-2/IND0002/CALL-2/IND0007/IND0006** 2) Date of commencement of download of Tender document from Karnataka Public Procurement Portal Website https://kppp.karnataka.gov.in : **04.03.2026 onwards.** 3) Date, Time & Venue of Pre-bid meeting : **07.03.2026 at 12.30 Noon** at the following venue: Chief Health Officer(PH) Chamber, Ground Floor, Annexe-3 Building, N.R. Square, Bengaluru-560 002. 4) Last date & time for uploading Online Queries in Karnataka Public Procurement Portal: **07.03.2026 upto 5.00 p.m.** 5) Last date & time for submission of e-Tender in KPP Portal: **12.03.2026 upto 5.00 p.m.** 6) Date & time of online opening of the technical bids in KPP Portal: **13.03.2026, 05.10 p.m.** 7) Date & time of Demonstration of Sample submission: Shall be intimated after technical bid opening. 8) Address for communication: Chief Health Officer (Public Health), Office of CHO, Ground Floor, Annexe-2 Building, N.R. Square, Bengaluru-560 002. e-mail: choph515@gmail.com Phone: 9845208571.

Note: Completed Tenders shall be uploaded through e-tendering system by the Tenderers using their User ID on or before the last date & time stipulated.

In the event of the specified date of opening of Technical Bid (First Cover) being declared a holiday for the Purchaser, the Technical Bid will be opened on the next working day.

Sd/-
Chief Health Officer (Public Health),
Greater Bengaluru Authority

FINTECH PUSH

PhonePe eyes up to $10.5 bn valuation in India IPO

MUMBAI, REUTERS

Walmart-backed Indian fintech firm PhonePe, the country's most used payments platform, is aiming to list at a valuation of between $9 billion and $10.5 billion, sources said.

That suggests the initial public offering will raise about $900 million to $1.05 billion. But even at the top end, the deal would mark a cut from the $12 billion valuation at which PhonePe last raised $100 million in private markets in 2023.

Walmart will trim its stake in PhonePe by about 12% in the firm's IPO, while Tiger Global and Microsoft plan to exit their stakes, according to the firm's IPO filing.

The three firms will sell around 50.7 million shares in the offering and PhonePe will not issue any new shares.

PhonePe, which competes with Google Pay and Paytm in India, filed for its IPO in September and aims to complete the process by April, one of the sources said, although the timeline could shift depending on capital market conditions, including any impact from the West Asia conflict.

PhonePe, Walmart, Tiger Global, and Microsoft did not immediately respond to emails seeking comment.

The expected valuation of PhonePe, and timing of the issue have not been previously reported.

PhonePe's listing would make it India's second-largest fintech IPO, behind Paytm's about $20 billion listing in 2021.

Paytm currently trades at a market capitalisation of $7.1 billion.

'Monetisation remains a question mark'

PhonePe has more than 650 million registered users and processed nearly 10 billion of the 21.7 billion transactions on India's unified payments interface (UPI) in January, regulatory data showed.

But payments in India remain a low-margin business.

India launched UPI in 2016 and barred companies from charging fees for the instant payment service to spur digital payments and reduce cash use in Asia's No.3 economy.

PhonePe's losses widened to Rs 1,444 crore in the six months ended September 30, from Rs 1,203 crore a year ago, while revenue rose about 22% to Rs 3,918 crore, the firm's IPO filing showed.

Two portfolio managers, who met the company's management in pre-IPO roadshows, said excitement around the country's fintech sector had cooled and that there were lingering questions around PhonePe's ability to monetise its user base — a key reason it may not achieve a valuation closer to its last funding round.

"Monetisation remains a question mark. Active users aren't growing at the same pace so the game is all about upsell and that remains to be seen," one of the portfolio managers said.

Investors also see India's fintech market as overcrowded with little differentiation among players, said a banker to the issue.

IN BRIEF

State Boxing C'ships on March 21-22

▸ The Karnataka Amateur Boxing Association (KABA) will conduct the 8th edition of the Youth (U-19) State Boxing Championships for both men and women at the Jawaharlal Nehru Indoor Stadium in Shivamogga on March 21 & 22, reports DHNS.

The last date for registration is March 12. For further details, contact Sateesh Kumar 9880988888.

DSCE, MSRIT A into final

▸ After scoring 61 runs, Rohith V picked up a fifer (5/37) to power DSCE to a 77-run win over RVCE in a league game of the 24th Dr. MS Ramaiah Memorial State Level Inter Engineering Colleges cricket tournament on Wednesday, reports DHNS.

In the other match MSRIT A defeated MSRIT B by 48 runs.

DSCE and MSRIT A will face each other in the final on Thursday.

Brief scores: DSCE: 215/3 in 30 overs (Sai Nandan 72, Rohith V 61, Vibhu 34) bt RVCE: 138 all out in 23.3 overs (Kaustubh 55; Rohith V 5-37).

MSRIT A: 207 all out in 27.5 overs (Chinmay 61, Rohan 46, Sreecharan 43; Vikas 3-31, Sidvin 2-42) bt MSRIT B: 159/7 in 30 overs (Adhoksh 45, Guru Shreyas 26, Sidvin 26; Keshav 2-15, Kummitha 2-23).

Karnataka's Samarth wins

▸ Karnataka's Samarth J Rao has emerged as the champion in the Para Chess category at the inaugural All India Postal Para Games held in Bhilai, Chhattisgarh, reports DHNS.

Samarth represented Honnavar Post Office of Karwar division at the event.

K'taka wrestlers win 3 medals

▸ Karnataka wrestlers Sairam, Karthik and Janavi bagged a bronze medal each at the U-15 National Wrestling Championships in Salem, reports DHNS.

Pak drop Babar from ODI squad

▸ Pakistan dropped batting great Babar Azam on Wednesday for next week's one-day international series in Bangladesh while the Test squad is set to have its youngest ever head coach with PCB offering the role to former captain Sarfaraz Ahmed, reports AFP from Islamabad. The PCB is awaiting a final confirmation from the 38-year-old.

Squad: Shaheen Shah Afridi (c), Abdul Samad, Abrar Ahmed, Faheem Ashraf, Faisal Akram, Haris Rauf, Hussain Talat, Maaz Sadaqat, Mohammad Rizwan, Mohammad Wasim, Muhammad Ghazi Ghori, Saad Masood, Sahibzada Farhan, Salman Ali Agha. Shamyl Hussain

King Louis for Aperitivo Cup

KOLKATA SELECTIONS

Neil Darashah-trained King Louis and to be ridden by Suraj Narredu is fancied to win the Aperitivo Cup, the feature event of the races to be run over a distance of seven furlongs on Thursday. The first race starts at 2:30 pm.

1. Diabolical Handicap - 1200M: Swift Lady 1, Dubai Prince 2, Star Pride 3.
2. Toroloco Handicap - 1100M: Lavish Girl 1, Cach2 2, Resplendence 3.
3. Prince Blossom Cup - 1100M: Cielo 1, Fifty Shades 2, Peaberry 43
4. Aperitivo Cup - 1400M: King Louis 1, Abhicandra 2. Raffaello 3.
5. Colombiana Handicap - 1600M: Xanthe 1, Mindful 2, Aeropoli 3.
6. Dare To Dream Handicap - 2000M: Divine Gift 1, Cascade 2, Sanaya 3.
Day's best: Xanthe. **Jackpot:** 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. **I treble:** 1, 2, 3. **II treble:** 4, 5, 6.

◆ ON TV ◆

CRICKET

T20 WC Semifinal: India vs England **(7 pm). LIVE** on **Star Sports Network, JioHotstar.**

FOOTBALL

ISL: East Bengal FC vs FC Goa **(5 pm). LIVE** on **Sony Sports Network, FanCode.**

BADMINTON

All England Open: Round of 16 **(3:30 pm). LIVE** on **Star Sports Select 2, JioHotstar.**

Mixed reactions for 'best of five' Slam proposal for women

Sabalenka believes she would have more Grand Slams

INDIAN WELLS, AFP

World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka on Tuesday voiced her support for a proposal to make women's matches best-of-five sets during the later stages of Grand Slam tournaments.

Speaking ahead of this week's ATP-WTA tournament in Indian Wells, the hard-hitting Sabalenka said she believed switching to five sets would benefit her game.

"Yeah, let's do that," the four-time Grand Slam singles champion said when asked about the idea, which was floated by incoming US Tennis Association chief Craig Tiley at the Australian Open earlier this year.

"I feel like I would have probably more Grand Slams," Sabalenka added. "Physically I'm really strong, and I'm pretty confident that my body can handle that. So let's do it."

Tiley, the former head of the Australian Open who last week was named as the new USTA chief, told the New York Times in an interview last month that switching to five sets from the quarter-finals onwards at Grand Slams should be discussed.

"All the research shows interest grows as the match goes on," Tiley said. "As a sport, we need to evolve."

But while Sabalenka backed the move, other women players were more circumspect.

World No. 1 Aryna Sabalenka (left) backed the best-of-five set proposal for women in the latter stages of Grand Slams while Iga Swiatek is against it. REUTERS/AFP

"I mean, it probably would favor me, because I'm physically up there with the best, but I mean, I probably wouldn't want to see that happen," Coco Gauff told reporters.

"And if it were to happen, I would prefer it to be the whole tournament, not just the quarters. I think changing the format in the middle of the tournament defeats the purpose of the playing field."

Six-time Grand Slam champion and former world No. 1 Iga Swiatek was firmly against the idea, and questioned the suggestion it would boost audiences.

"I think honestly it's a weird approach in the world where everything is becoming faster, you know," Swiatek said. "So I don't know if the audience honestly would like that.

"Also, I don't know if we would be able to keep the quality for five sets. Well, that's a fact, like, men are more physically strong and they can handle it for sure better."

Swiatek said the physical demands would also force players to adjust their schedules, potentially leading to them playing fewer tournaments.

"We have never practiced in a way to prepare for that, so we would need to change, I think, our whole calendar, because the Grand Slams would be so tough that I don't think we would have honestly time to prepare for any other tournaments," she said.

"I think it would change a lot. I don't think it would change anything for good."

World No. 5 Jessica Pegula echoed Swiatek's remarks, stating while five sets were well within the physical capabilities of women, a switch could be counter-productive.

"I think we have amazing female athletes that honestly I think we could do that," the American said. "I don't think it's the fact that we can't; I just don't necessarily think that we should.

"On that aspect, I don't even know how you would schedule tournaments. We'd have to add weeks. We can't even get through the schedule now."

Aravindh Chithambaram

Aravindh pushes Gukesh to last spot

PRAGUE, PTI: Defending champion Aravindh Chithambaram found a textbook-style tactic to outwit compatriot D Gukesh, relegating the reigning FIDE world champion to the last spot after the end of sixth round of Masters section of Prague International Chess Festival here.

The victory for Aravindh meant that Gukesh is now ranked number 20 on the live rating list that did not feature Viswanathan Anand due to his possibly inactive status. There has been a clear struggle for Gukesh to maintain his status as the world champion since he won the title in December 2024.

Possibly the only exception was the Tata Steel Masters in January 2025 when he lost the tiebreaker to R Praggnanandhaa after tying for first place. A recent slum has now seen the world champion losing over fifty points in rating.

Results: Round 6: Masters: D Gukesh (Ind, 1.5) lost to Aravindh Chithambaram (Ind, 2.5); David Anton Guijarro (Esp, 3.5) drew with Parham Maghsoodloo (IRI, 3); Hans Moke Niemann (USA, 2) drew with Vincent Keymer (Ger, 2.5); Nodirbek Yakubboev (Uzb, 2.5) drew with Nodirbek Abdusattorov (Uzb, 4); Jorden van Foreest (Ned, 4.5) drew with David Navara (Cze, 4).
Challengers: Daniil Yuffa (Esp, 3) drew with Surya Shekhar Ganguly (Ind, 1.5); Benjamin Gledura (Hun, 3) beat Nemec Jachym (Cze, 3); Divya Deshmukh (Ind, 3) drew with Thomas Beerdsen (Ned, 3.5); Hrbek Stepan (Cze, 3.5) drew with Jonas Buhl Bjerre (Den, 3); Zhu Jiner (Chn, 2) drew with Finek Vanclav (Cze, 4.5).

TENNIS

'Majority of players have left Dubai'

Safety and wellbeing of our players, support teams remain priority: ATP

PARIS, AFP

The "vast majority" of players who were stranded in Dubai following last week's men's tennis tournament in the emirate have been able to leave the UAE, the ATP announced Wednesday.

Several high-profile players, including champion Daniil Medvedev, were unable to leave the country following the start of Israel and the United States' war with Iran.

"The vast majority of players who were in Dubai have successfully departed today on selected flights," the ATP said.

"The safety and wellbeing of our players, support teams and staff members remains our highest priority, and we continue to remain in close contact with those affected."

Russian media reports said Medvedev and his compatriots Andrey Rublev and Karen Khachanov had been able to leave Dubai via Oman on Tuesday.

They were then due to head to Istanbul before flying to the United States, where the ATP/WTA 1000 Indian Wells tournament starts later Wednesday.

Daniil Medvedev, Andrey Rublev (above) and Karen Khachanov have all left Dubai via Oman. AFP

As all three players are seeded for that event they will not play until the second round, which runs Friday and Saturday.

Finnish player Harri Heliovaara, who won the Dubai doubles title alongside Britain's Henry Patten, said in a blog post he had managed to reach Italy.

"We got on the flight to Milan, and as I write this, we are in Italian airspace," said Heliovaara.

"We will probably get to Finland on Wednesday evening."

A second-tier ATP Challenger tournament in another Emirati city Fujairah was cancelled Tuesday after drone strikes on nearby oil refineries.

India concede late to go down to Vietnam

PERTH, PTI: A gritty India conceded a goal in the injury stoppage time to go down fighting against higher-ranked Vietnam 1-2 in their Women's AFC Asian Cup opening match here on Wednesday.

Debutant Sanfida Nongrum, a second-half substitute, equalised in the 65th minute after Vietnam took the lead in the 30th minute through Ngan Thi Van Su.

India were agonisingly close to grab one point from the match but conceded a goal in the fourth minute of second-half added time with Ngan Thi Van Su (94th) scoring her second of the match.

It was a heartbreak for the Indians under new head coach Amelia Valverde from Costa Rica as there was just three minutes left in the match after seven minutes added for injury stoppage.

Despite the loss, India, lowest ranked in Group C at 67th, will hold their heads high against the 36th-ranked Vietnam, who though dominated throughout.

Vietnam had made it to the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup and had reached quarterfinals in the previous edition of the Asian Cup in 2022.

Goalkeeper Panthoi Chanu was outstanding under the bar, making as many as five saves, while captain Sweety Devi Ngangbam marshalled the Indian backline with aplomb.

Forward Manisha Kalyan, was a constant threat for the Vietnamese defence.

Result: India: 1 (Sanfida Nongrum 65th) lt to Vietnam: 2 (Ngan Thi Van Su 30th, 94th).

Raina, Desai start with easy wins

BENGALURU, DHNS

India's Ankita Raina and Zeel Desai produced composed performances to advance into the second round of the ITF W35 Kalaburagi on Wednesday, while Karnataka's Soha Sadiq showed early promise before bowing out after a dramatic shift in momentum at the Chandrashekhar Patil Stadium in Kalaburagi.

Eighth seed Raina produced an impressive show to beat fellow Indian Sonal Patil 6-1, 6-3. Patil began by holding serve in the opening game, but Raina quickly took control, winning the next six games to seal the first set.

The second set followed a similar pattern early on, with Raina racing to a 3-0 lead. Patil responded with determination, holding serve twice in succession to stay within striking distance. Even after Raina moved to 5-2 and looked set to close out the match comfortably, Patil battled back to make it 5-3.

Raina, however, maintained her composure in the following game, finishing the match with authority to book her place in the next round.

Fifth seed Desai also progressed after a strong showing against fellow Indian Jennifer Luikham. Desai claimed the opening set 6-2 and continued to dictate the rallies.

Results: Singles (prefix denotes seeding): First Round: 8-Ankita Raina (Ind) bt Sonal Patil (Ind) 6-1, 6-3; 5-Zeel Desai (Ind) bt Jennifer Luikham (Ind) 6-2, 6-4; 1-Jasmijn Gimbrere (Ned) bt Aishwarya Jadhav (Ind) 6-2, 6-1; 6-T Naklo (Tha) bt Valeria Savinykh 6-3, 6-2; Polina Kuharenko bt Akanksha Dileep Nitture (Ind) 6-2, 6-1; Anna Sedyasheva bt Sandeepthi Rao (Ind) 6-2, 6-4; Eva Marie Desvignes (Sgp) bt Soha Sadiq (Ind) 7-5, 6-0; Elina Nepliy bt Kashish Bhatia (Ind) 6-0, 6-4; Evgeniya Burdina bt 4-Shrivalli Bhamidipaty (Ind) 5-1 (ret.).

Eighth seed Ankita Raina defeated unseeded Sonal Patil in straight sets 6-1, 6-3 to enter the second round of the ITF W35 Kalaburagi on Wednesday. DH PHOTO /TAJUDDIN AZAD

Niranjan, Darshan power Customs to victory

BENGALURU, DHNS: A 92-run knock by Niranjan followed by a five-wicket haul by Darshan MB proved pivotal in a high-scoring match for Central Excise and Customs, who defeated AGO Recreation Club by 43 runs in the KSCA Group II - I Division league cum knockout tournament.

Niranjan, along with Snehal Kauthankar (84), took Customs to 225/4 in 20 overs. In response, AGORC could only manage 182/8 in 20 overs despite a fighting 67 by MS Bhandage as Darshan (5/30) took wickets from the other end.

Brief scores: Central Excise & Customs: 225/4 in 20 overs (Snehal Suhas Kauthankar 84, Niranjan 92, Samarth R 30; Sunil Kumar DH 2-22) bt AGORC: 182/8 in 20 overs (Nikin Jose SJ 35, Karthik 24, MS Bhandage 67; Darshan MB 5-30).
HAL Sports Club: 108/9 in 20 overs (Sumukha Prasad S 28; Vikas Chanalia 2-24, Vikas Doddamani 2-20, Abhishek HR 2-31, Sachin R Gankal 2-14) lt to DELL Cricket Club: 114/6 in 14.2 overs (Gajjala Dileep Kumar 3-33, Rahul Prasanna 2-20).
SBI: 150/8 in 20 overs (Prakhar Chaturvedi 35; Pradeep T 3-31, Anand Doddamani 2-22) lt to RWF: 156/2 in 16.2 overs (Sagar Solanki 63, Rohan Patil 58 n.o.).

Aditi shines in Vanguards' triumph over Bharath Sports

BENGALURU, DHNS: Aditi scored 24 points while Prashitha added nine more as Bangalore Vanguards edged Bharath Sports Union 38-34 in the Mathru Cup State women's basketball league championship for the SMN Memorial Trophy at the Sree Kanteerava Stadium indoor courts here on Wednesday.

Results: Bangalore Vanguards: 38 (Aditi 24, Prashitha 9) bt Bharath Sports Union: 34 (Archana 12, Miriam 8). HT: 15-12; JSC: 52 (Tharushi 18, Sharleen 12) bt YMMA BC: 23 (Anjalee 13). HT: 35-10; attabhiramanagr BC: 35 (Gauri 13, Hansika 9) bt Koramangla BC: 24 (Hrishita 12, Shreya Shetty 5). HT: (17-14); Young Orions SC: 48 (Bindu 13, Isabel 11) bt Bangalore Sporting BC: 28 (Vaishnavi 9). HT: 27-14; Viveks SC: 55 (Vedika 18, Sreshta 13) bt Kolar Dist: 4 (Ranjitha 2). HT: 29-2; All Stars BC Mysore: 41 (Shravani 14, Lahari 10) bt MCHS BC: 36 (Nishevitha 10, Livdeep 08). HT: 26-14.

Harshit ton seals victory for BEL

BENGALURU, DHNS

Harshit Pai scored a decisive century as BEL Sports Club defeated Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike by 29 runs in the KSCA Group II - II Division league cum knockout tournament.

Aniruidh Srinivas contributed 63 runs too as BEL posted 217/4 in 20 overs. In response, BBMP managed 188.5 in 20 overs with Nagarjun TM (52) and S Shylesh (53) contributing half-centuries.

LOCAL CRICKET

Brief scores: BEL 217/4 in 20 overs (Harshit Pai 100, Anirudh Srinivas 63; M Chitti Babu 2-35) bt BBMP: 188/5 in 20 overs (Nagarjun TM 52, Tahir Hussain 41, S Shylesh 53).
Secretariat: 159/3 in 20 overs (Tanshh Krishna M 63 n.o., Aryaman Jhalani 48) bt Advocate Association: 125 all out in 17 overs (Afzal Khan 39; Ashwath Narayana G 2-33, Riyaz Pasha 3-19).
SWR Rail Club, Bangalore: 63 all out in 16.2 overs (Pavan Shirdi S 3-14, Umesh Basanniyavar 3-10) lt to Bosch SC, Naganathapura: 64/2 in 5 overs.
VIS, Bhadravathi: 144/7 in 20 overs (Tanmay M 53; Abhin SP 3-21) bt LIC: 124/8 in 20 overs (Rishab Navarathan J 45, Karan U 45; Yogi 2-31, N Boloor 2-23, Shreyank Sagar 2-21).
GTR: 107/8 in 20 overs (Kusha Chandra Panda 33, A Murali 32; KK Kantesh 4-18) lt to BEML SC, KGF: 109/2 in 11.3 overs (Ananthavishnu MH 56 n.o.).
ITI SC: 171/4 in 20 overs (Dr Prabhu G 25, Sandopu Surya Teja 32, Joseph Zion Raj T 51, Thofique R 46; Munindra R 2-26, M Basavaraja 2-30) bt BHEL EPD CSBD: 166/6 in 20 overs (M Basavaraja 86; Srinivasa Murthy T 2-39).
BEMRC: 107 all out in 19.3 overs (Karthik J 3-21, Krishnamurthy T 2-18, Gaurav 2-10) lt to Continental Automotive CC: 109/3 in 16.5 overs (Krishnamurthy T 41, Thejas L 28).
BEML Rail Coach: 145/6 in 20 overs (Vineeth Manjunath 45, Suraj V L 74; Chiragj 2-31, Nikhil Vedanth RV 2-18) lt to L&T Construction Equipments: 150/1 in 14.1 overs (Pruthviraj K B 63 n.o., Nikhil Vedanth RV 67 n.o.).
Hutti Gold Mines: 140/9 in 20 overs (Adarsh MA 4-31) lt to BWSSB Employees Association: 142/2 in 13.3 overs (M Renuka Prasad 27, CR Kumarswamy 57 n.o.).
Commercial Tax CCb: 112/9 in 18 overs (Ajay Bhide 2-26, Vineeth B 2-18, Raghavendra HS 4-18) lt to Infosys CC: 115/5 in 16.4 overs (Sachin Rajput 45; Aries KA 2-17, Jeevan CM 2-30).
CMTI Club: 138/8 in 20 overs (Phaniraj HS 24, Abdul Rehman 37, Oguboyina Vinod 26; Anvith M 3-35, Vinu Prasad 3-25) lt to Union Bank of India: 140/3 in 19.3 overs (Syed Gazi Salahuddin 64 n.o.).
CIL SC: 138/8 in 20 overs (Aryan BV 72; Koushik BP 3-17) lt to Karnataka Postal Sports Club: 139/4 in 16.1 overs (Kishore Naik K 89, Shivashankar Chinagudi 28 n.o.; Kapil 2-15).
South Railway Institute, Mysore: 135/4 in 20 overs (Nishit Srivatsa UB 43, Dhananjaya S 35*; Ashwani Kumar Mishra 2-19) bt Indian Air Force, Yelahanka: 111 all out in 19.2 overs (Romen Gogoi 22; Nishit Srivatsa UB 2-22, Raghavendra MV 2-27, Suhas BS 2-14, Surendra Rathore 2-16).
ADE Sports Club: 181/3 in 20 overs (Pratham R 25, Akash V 64, Pravesh KM 52*) bt Deccan Herald & Prajavani Sports Club: 96/6 in 20 overs (Raunak 44, Syed Moinuddin Nasheed 34; Shabahat Hussain 2-19, Akash Pal 2-4, Bablu Nayak 2-4).
BDSA, South Western Railway Bangalore: 132/8 in 20 overs (Varun K 43, Pralayakaveri Vijaya Kumar 36; Somashekara Murthy KS 2-23, Siddarameshwara HM 2-20) lt to Karnataka State Police Cricket Club: 133/3 in 13.2 overs (Rakesh NK 46; Doddi Bala Ganesh 2-29).
Bhagirathi Group: 230/5 in 20 overs (Luvnith Sisodia 108, Aadarsh Prajwal S 32, Aaron K Joseph 28, Aarav Mahesh 27; Ajith Vikram 2-40) bt EPF Sports & Recreation Club: 84 all out in 17.4 overs (Santosh Kumar Singh 3-23, Ambresh K 3-7).
Karnataka Government Secretariat Cricket Club: 157/8 in 20 overs (Smaran Ramesh 55, Prashanth Shetty 24; Ravi Ranjan Kumar 2-27, Arjun Yalavarthi 2-24, Shiva Kumar SM 3-41) lt to LRDE Sports Club: 161/4 in 15.2 overs (Vishwa H 77, Karan Raghavendra 53 n.o.; Krishna KV 2-19).
Indian Air Force, Jalahalli: 90 all out in 19.4 overs (Arnav Kush 25; Sitaram Meena 5-11, Manjunath 4-22) lt to Railway Institute, Krishnarajapuram: 95/5 in 17.4 overs (Likith Gowda M 32; Ashish Kumar 2-16).
BHEL EDN Sports Club: 130/3 in 20 overs (Praveen Pattar 45) bt Bangalore Dairy Sports Club: 107/9 in 20 overs (Akarsh GN 40; Mahesh Acharya 2-20, Sunil BB 3-17).

Atletico scrape into final despite loss

BARCELONA, AFP

Atletico Madrid struggled through a 3-0 Copa del Rey semifinal second leg defeat at Barcelona on Tuesday but scraped into the final 4-3 on aggregate.

The Spanish champions almost produced a comeback for the ages after their 4-0 first leg defeat in early February, but fell just short at Camp Nou.

Youngster Marc Bernal netted twice for the record 32-time winners and Raphinha scored a penalty as Barcelona tried in vain to claw back Diego Simeone's side's lead.

Atletico, who clung on desperately in the final stages, returned to the final for the first time since 2013. They will face Real Sociedad or Athletic Bilbao, who meet on Wednesday in the second semi-final second leg.

"We knew it would be a tricky game, to come back from 4-0 down is not easy. But I'm proud of the team, we gave everything," Raphinha told Movistar.

"We are disappointed because we wanted to be in the final, and I think we deserved it from the game we played, but we have to respect Atletico too, a great team and they defended what they had and did well."

Atletico goalkeeper Juan Musso admitted his team were up against the wall but was delighted to reach the final.

"We are dreaming of winning the cup. Maybe it wasn't our best game, we were better in the first leg," Musso told Movistar.

"We showed what we were made of in the final 15 minutes, it was all in their favour, their pitch, their fans, they needed just one more goal, but the team suffered through it."

Barcelona came out flying and Fermin Lopez's long-range effort just over the bar set the tone, as Hansi Flick's side threw everything they had at a potential comeback.

They were dealt an early setback when Jules Kounde went off injured in the opening stages. Antoine Griezmann came close against his former side as Atletico threatened on the counter-attack.

Ferran Torres fired wide and had a shot saved low at the near post by Musso before Barcelona took the lead.

Teenage star Lamine Yamal drilled across the face of goal for Bernal to finish from close range, with one 18-year-old setting up another.

Ademola Lookman headed narrowly off-target for Atletico and came to rue the miss as Barca doubled their advantage before the interval.

Spain midfielder Pedri was tripped in the box by Marc Pubill and Raphinha sent Musso the wrong way from the spot.

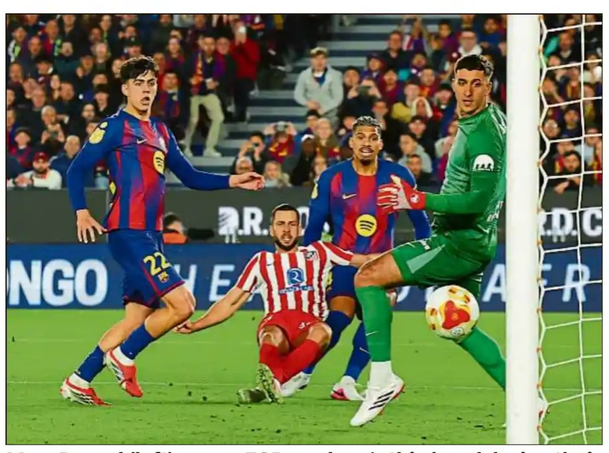
Joao Cancelo almost grabbed the third but his shot was beaten away by Musso at full stretch, with Diego Simeone's team on the ropes.

Bernal set up a frantic finale when he volleyed home Cancelo's swirling cross to take Barca within one goal of the crumbling Rojiblancos.

Flick put centre-back Ronald Araujo up front for the final stages, in search of a fourth goal to "make the impossible possible", as he called on his team to do before the game.

Gerard Martin hammered narrowly over the bar as Barca turned the screw.

Result: Semifinals (2nd leg): Barcelona: 3 (Bernal 29th, 72nd, Raphinha 45th+5) bt Atletico Madrid: 0. (Atletico through on 4-3 aggregate).



Marc Bernal (left) scores FC Barcelona's third goal during their 3-0 win over Atletico Madrid at Camp Nou in Barcelona on Tuesday night. REUTERS

Wolves stun Liverpool

Liverpool suffered an embarrassing 2-1 defeat at Wolves as Andre's stoppage-time strike sealed a dramatic victory for the Premier League's bottom club on Tuesday.

Arne Slot's side fell behind to Rodrigo Gomes' strike in the closing stages at Molineux.

Mohamed Salah hauled Liverpool level with his first goal in 11 top-flight games dating back to November. But Andre's first goal for Wolves inflicted the latest humbling loss in a chastening season for Liverpool. It was the first time the Premier League's bottom club had beaten the reigning champions since Crystal Palace defeated Chelsea in 2017.

Liverpool have conceded 14 goals in the last 15 minutes of the second half, including five in the 90th minute or later -- the most by any side in a single season in the Premier League era.

The Reds remain fifth but their hopes of qualifying for next season's Champions League have been hurt by the defeat.

Results: Wolves: 2 (Rodrigo Gomes 78th, Andre 90+4th) bt Liverpool: 1 (Salah 83rd); Bournemouth: 0 drew with Brentford: 0; Everton: 2 (Tarkowski 32nd, Dewsbury-Hall 60th) bt Burnley: 0; Leeds: 0 lt to Sunderland: 1 (Diarra 70th P).

Familiar foes clash with AN EYE ON FINALE

India eye an encore of 2024 as they take on England in the semifinal today

SIDNEY KIRAN
MUMBAI, DHNS

Familiar foes India and England, two teams who haven't necessarily looked their best but have found a way to motor on through moments of brilliance and teamwork, will lock horns in the second semifinal of the ICC T20 World Cup in search of the perfect game.

Billed as the overwhelming favourites prior to the tournament owing to their impeccable run in the build-up, India sailed through the group phase unbeaten but cracks in the batting line-up were evident. South Africa exposed them ruthlessly in the opening Super Eights game that left India's semifinal hopes hanging by a thread, but the Men in Blue made some timely tactical changes to bounce back strongly in the remaining two games to set up a last-four clash against the Three Lions for a third successive time in the marquee event at the Wankhede Stadium.

Just like India, England too have endured a topsy-turvy ride with eerily similar struggles - an opener (Jos Buttler) struggling for runs and the middle-order firing in fits and starts. They were almost stunned by Associate Nation Nepal in the opening match at this very venue, but the two-time champions brought their big-match experience to the fore to eke out a nervy four-run win. But like how the Proteas exposed India's chinks, the West Indies hammered England in the next game. They got the job done against Scotland and Italy before going through the Super Eights unbeaten despite enduring a rocky ride.

Apart from the similar journey, struggles and strengths, the semifinal between India and England will also be a battle of familiarities, with each one trying to outdo the other. Given India's struggles against spinners this tournament, England will be looking to unleash leggie Adil Rashid, their leading wicket-taker so far with 11 scalps, left-arm orthodox Liam Dawson (10), and off-spinner Will Jacks (7). While Dawson may not be such a decisive factor considering the assortment of left-handers India have in their line-up — five of the top seven are southpaws — Jacks and Rashid, with his googlies, could prove to be a handful.

Spinners apart, England also have the menacing Jofra Archer (10) and Jamie Overton (9), both pacers who can make life difficult upfront for Indian batters with their raw speed and ability to bowl effective short balls. Although the free-stroking India batters love pace, it's the short stuff they aren't particularly comfortable with, and both Archer and Overton will be looking to exploit it.

Indian batters, however, have shown in the last two games they can adapt as per conditions and needs. The recall of Sanju Samson to the opening slot and dropping Tilak Varma two spots down to number five has given the batting the edge. India -- thanks to all-rounders Hardik Pandya, Shivam Dube and Axar Patel -- bat deep, and it could come down to one of them playing that match-winning knock.

India too have two proven spinners in Varun Chakravarthy and Axar, but the problem is the former is going through a rough patch from the start of the Super Eights phase. Opposing batters have exhibited courage to take him on, and the mystery spinner has ended up losing his lines and lengths. He's been putting in the hard yards in a bid to regain his mojo, and Thursday will be a perfect occasion to do so.

India will be banking big on their pace gun Jasprit Bumrah. It's at this very ground Bumrah announced himself to the cricketing world with his sensational exploits for the Mumbai Indians, and he'll be looking to script another defining moment in a storied career. In such big games between two well-balanced teams, it's always about who seizes the key moments, and Thursday will be no different.

The squads: India: Suryakumar Yadav (capt), Abhishek Sharma, Tilak Varma, Sanju Samson, Shivam Dube, Ishan Kishan, Hardik Pandya, Arshdeep Singh, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, Varun Chakaravarthy, Kuldeep Yadav, Axar Patel, Washington Sundar, Rinku Singh. **England:** Harry Brook (capt), Rehan Ahmed, Jofra Archer, Tom Banton, Jacob Bethell, Jos Buttler, Sam Curran, Liam Dawson, Ben Duckett, Will Jacks, Jamie Overton, Adil Rashid, Phil Salt, Josh Tongue, Luke Wood.

Tilak Varma during a practice session, ahead of India's semifinal match against England at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Wednesday. PTI

Allen's whirlwind hundred takes ruthless NZ to final

Inspired Kiwis stun South Africa with a comprehensive nine-wicket win

KOLKATA, PTI

A ruthless New Zealand rode on a record 33-ball century from 'local lad' Finn Allen to outclass South Africa by nine wickets and storm into the T20 World Cup final here Wednesday.

Allen, who will be turning up for Kolkata Knight Riders in another three weeks' time, smashed 10 fours and 8 sixes to finish an incredible chase of 170 in just 12.5 overs, leaving entire South African team dumbfounded.

The century, fastest ever across all editions of T20 World Cup, was an exhibition of brute masculinity that Eden Gardens has ever witnessed.

Plonking the front-foot, Allen practised range hitting like pro-golfers as the balls soared into the orbit and disappeared in thin air.

From 76 to 100, it took Allen five deliveries from Marco Jansen (0/53 in 2.5 overs), whose supposedly dream day turned into an absolute nightmare.

The side led by Mitchell Santner never looked like losing the match as it first restricted the Proteas for a below-par 169 for 8, riding on a fine spin bowling performance from left-arm spinner Cole McConchie (2/9) and Rachin Ravindra (2/29).

If South Africa saw some silver lining in Jansen's 30-ball-54, the two newly-recruited KKR openers Tim Seifert (58 off 33 balls) and Allen blew them to smithereens with a rollicking 117-run stand in just 9 overs.

This is Black Caps' second T20 World Cup summit clash after 2021 (in UAE).

If India beat England in Mumbai on Thursday, it will be the repeat fixture of last year's Champions Trophy final.

Between Allen and Seifert, the duo hit 13 boundaries and six sixes. The match as a contest was as good as over within the powerplay when 84 runs were scored -- 22 coming in the sixth over bowled by Corbin Bosch.

Allen completed his half-century off 19 balls. he took only 14 deliveries for his second fifty even as he took medical time out in between.

The Kolkata Knight Riders coach Abhishek Nayar would be all smiles on Wednesday night after what he saw was intent and statement in equal measure.

With dew setting in during the latter part of the South African innings, Allen and Seifert found the Eden track to be perfect for hitting through the line.

Brief scores: South Africa: 169/8 in 20 overs (Dewald Brevis 34, Tristan Stubbs 29, Marco Jansen 55 n.o., Matt Henry 2-34, Cole McConchie 2-9, Rachin Ravindra 2-29) lt to New Zealand: 173/1 in 12.5 overs (Tim Seifert 58, Finn Allen 100 n.o.). **Result:** New Zealand won by nine wickets. **PoM:** Finn Allen.

Finn Allen scored an unbeaten 33-ball hundred to help New Zealand hammer South Africa by nine wickets in their T20 World Cup semifinal at the Eden Gardens. AFP

Need 'special and perfect' game to beat street-smart England: Morkel

SIDNEY KIRAN
MUMBAI, DHNS

Calling England a 'street smart and dangerous' side, India's bowling coach Morne Morkel reckoned his wards need to play a 'special and perfect' game to outwit the Three Lions in the semifinal of the T20 World Cup here on Thursday.

"That is something we haven't really spoken about, about playing the perfect game. I think the quality of this team has shown that, on the day, somebody can put their hands up and put up a performance. And then hopefully now in the last two games, especially tomorrow night, we can put that special performance in," said Morkel at the press conference here at the Wankhede Stadium on Wednesday.

"All we can do is work hard at training. Unfortunately, we all know how the game goes, that success is never guaranteed. But if we can give ourselves the best chance to go out and perform. That is what we strive for. And a big occasion tomorrow night here, semifinal, a great stadium to play a great game of cricket. So hopefully, the boys can rock up tomorrow and just be calm and execute those skills."

With both India and England playing the same fearless cricket, Morkel believes it's going to be a cracking affair. "Playing against England, they're a team that's street smart. Obviously, there's a lot of quality in their side, batting quite long, deep, which makes them a very dangerous side. And then with the ball also, they've got wicket-taking options. I think the way they approach a T20 game, fearless, trying to take the game on, will give you opportunities and makes them a dangerous side.

Jos Buttler

Battle of nerves

"So I feel tomorrow is going to be a good shootout between two aggressive teams. And the side that can hold their nerve and play the conditions and read some of the conditions quite well and the quickest, I reckon we'll come out on top."

England skipper Harry Brook too echoed Morkel's thoughts.

"It's a dream come true for most of us to play in a World Cup semifinal against the home nation at a very iconic ground.

"So we're all really looking forward to it. We're obviously going into the game very confident.

"We're playing some good cricket. We haven't quite played that perfect performance, and I feel like it's just around the corner. Hopefully, it's tomorrow night and we go out there and we just play with freedom, play bravely, and look to take it to them as much as we can."

India vs England in T20Is

India ■ England

Before 2022	
19 Matches	
10	
9	
Since 2022	
10 Matches	
7	
3	
In India	
16 matches	
10	
6	
In Mumbai	
2 Matches	
1	
1	

In T20 World Cup

Year	Venue	Result
2007	Durban	Ind won by 18 runs
2009	Lord's	Eng won by 3 runs
2012	Colombo (RPS)	Ind won by 90 runs
2022	Adelaide	Eng won by 10 wkts
2024	Providence	Ind won by 68 runs

India results in T20 WC semifinals

Year	vs	Venue	Result
2007	Aus	Durban	Won by 15 runs
2014	SA	Mirpur	Won by 6 wkts
2016	WI	Mumbai	Lt by 7 wkts
2022	Eng	Adelaide	Lt by 10 wkts
2024	Eng	Providence	Won by 68 runs

England results in T20 WC semifinals

Year	vs	Venue	Result
2010	SL	Gros Islet	Won by 7 wkts
2016	NZ	Delhi	Won by 7 wkts
2021	NZ	Abu Dhabi	Lost by 5 wkts
2022	Ind	Adelaide	Won by 10 wkts
2024	Ind	Providence	Lost by 68 runs

LIVE ON STAR SPORTS & JIOHOTSTAR @ 7.00 PM

Overall record at Wankhede Stadium

	Won	Lost
India	5	2
Eng	3	3

Captaincy record

	Won	Lost	Win%
Suryakumar Yadav	40	8	80.0%
Harry Brook	14	2	77.8%

Compiled by Arun Gopalakrishnan

'Varun has got ability to pick wicket almost every ball'

SIDNEY KIRAN
MUMBAI, DHNS

An unexpected problem staring at the Indians as they enter the most crucial phase of the T20 World Cup is the sudden dip in form of their ace spinner Varun Chakravarthy. Yes, the 34-year-old is the leading wicket-taker with 12 scalps and a decent economy of 7.66 overall, but he's been unusually expensive since the start of the Super Eights phase.

South African batters took the attack to him, picking him apart for 47 runs and losing just one wicket in the process. The spinner's struggles continued at his hometown Chennai in the second game against Zimbabwe, where he gave away 35 runs (1 wicket). The status quo remained in the final match of the Super 8s versus West Indies at Eden Gardens — a ground which has been his home since 2020 when he joined Kolkata Knight Riders — where he leaked 40 runs (1 wicket).

Since the series against Bangladesh at home in October 2024, where he returned to the national fold after three years in the wilderness following a miserable 2021 T20 World Cup where he went wicketless in three games, Chakravarthy has been one of the primary weapons in skipper Suryakumar Yadav's armoury. He's bagged 69 wickets in 37 matches at an economy of 7.46.

It's not that Chakravarthy isn't trying — he's one of the most hard-working bowlers at the 'nets' and even goes full tilt all alone during optional sessions. It's just that suddenly things have gone awry for him, and he's seemingly looking at sea in trying to arrest the slide. Whatever he's been trying to the best of his capabilities too isn't working.

Bowling coach Morne Morkel, who's been seen having a lot of conversations with Chakravarthy during various training sessions, reckoned the spinner is just one game away from finding his potency.

"It's a tricky question to answer here now. I mean, obviously, I can't reveal his process, but I keep on telling him that in our bowling line-up, with the skill and variation Varun's got, he's got the ability to take a wicket almost every ball," Morkel said during the pre-match press conference on Wednesday.

"So if he goes for a boundary or the ball, he's not executed as well as possible. For him, it's just to move on to the next one and make sure he commits to that next ball. I think he's a highly skilful guy, hard to pick once you walk into the crease. So for him, it's just about getting that confidence with the ball."

India's Varun Chakravarthy (right) works with bowling coach Morne Morkel during a practice session, ahead of their match against England at the Wankhede Stadium. PTI

India

Strengths
A fearless approach and depth in batting gives India a potent look. Sanju Samson has returned to the playing XI in smashing style, Abhishek Sharma and Ishan Kishan can pulverise any attack, skipper Suryakumar Yadav has been on song, Tilak Varma has found his range, while finishers Shivam Dube and Hardik Pandya can flex their muscles.

Weaknesses
Although India have solid batting depth, they are yet to crack the code against spinners decisively this World Cup. With five out the seven batters being left-handers, teams have often exploited their weakness with the away going deliveries. Even when seamers have taken pace off the ball, the big-hitters have struggled. How India counter that determine the semis.

Key players

Hardik Pandya
The skipper of the Mumbai Indians is a man for the big occasion. On Wednesday he had an extended 'nets' session where he worked on his big hitting, often sending the ball soaring into the stands. If he can replicate that on Thursday, he could hurt England badly.

Jasprit Bumrah
The fast bowler is undoubtedly one of the best across formats and his four overs will have a major say in the semifinal. England have got a power-packed batting line-up and given how small the Wankhede Stadium is, India will be banking big on Bumrah to keep the Three Lions quiet.

England

Strengths
Just like the Indian team, England too is blessed with great batting depth and the Indian bowlers will face a severe test of skill and nerve on Thursday. Just imagine, even No. 10 Jofra Archer too is capable striker with who can smack a few into the stands. Even if a couple get going, then India could be in for a leather hunt.

Weaknesses
A big worry for England this World Cup, despite coasting through Super Eights undefeated, is that their batting hasn't fired in unison. There have been spectacular performances here and there but as a unit, they are yet to play the perfect game. That's what they'll be working on come Thursday.

Key players

Jofra Archer
The effortless Archer has been menacing this World Cup, bagging 10 wickets. He's bagged wickets and kept things quiet during Power Play and delivered at the death. Watch out for Archer on Thursday.

Will Jacks
With four Player of the Match awards in seven games, Jacks has undoubtedly been the star of England so far. Coming lower down the order, the off-spinner has played some match-winning cameos, literally changing the game on its head right at the end.

Conditions The summer has just arrived with temperatures peaking at 32 degree Celsius and Thursday will be another warm and humid evening.

Pitch On the eve of the match, India's bowling coach Morne Morkel and England's Harry Brook said they still can't read it because the grass was still left on the surface to avoid it from breaking up fast. The buzz is it should be a belter of a surface and not the tacky one India encountered during their opening game against the USA.

Compiled by Sidney Kiran

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